

Don't Touch That Dial
How Much Has TV Changed in 60 Years – Or Not

BY

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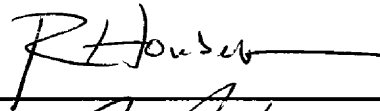
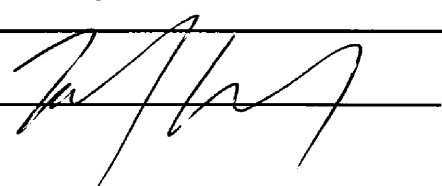
First Reader (Robert Houbeck, PhD) 
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INTRODUCTION

Television: A device that creates a picture with sound. The word literally means to watch from a distance and we certainly can and do. We watched in awe as a man walked on the moon and we unwillingly witnessed the murder of an assassin while still reeling from the shock of losing a president. We wept over our TV trays as body bags of American soldiers were loaded onto carrier planes in some godforsaken jungle called Vietnam. We were transfixed as Mother Nature unfolded her wrath in the form of earthquakes, volcanoes and tsunamis on the other side of the globe. Just when we think we've seen it all, through the magic of videotape, an event from fifty years ago can be enjoyed with better clarity than the original offered. By tuning in to satellites, live action from anywhere on this earth or beyond is at our fingertips for our viewing pleasure. All this and we don't have to leave the couch to be connected. It's all there in the talking box with moving pictures.

Regardless of which room the television is in, it's the focal point of the American home, prominently displayed front and center. There are 98.2% of households in the U.S. with at least one TV and 248 million sets are in use indicating that there are 2.4 sets per home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001).

In its development, television cemented our stake as a nation of consumers. First and foremost, television is an advertising medium and do not forget that for a moment. In spite of this intention, it is also a vast communicator that moved us away from the neighbor's fence and firmly into our houses. It educates, informs, entertains, inspires and angers. It's there

24/7, yet we hold the ultimate power to turn it on or off. Television is a magnificent medium for disseminating data as in Amber alerts, weather warnings and recalls. At its best, it's a mirror of our society while it teaches, guides and forces us to look at our own reflections. At its worst, it's annoying, insulting, degrading and salacious while mirroring our reflection.

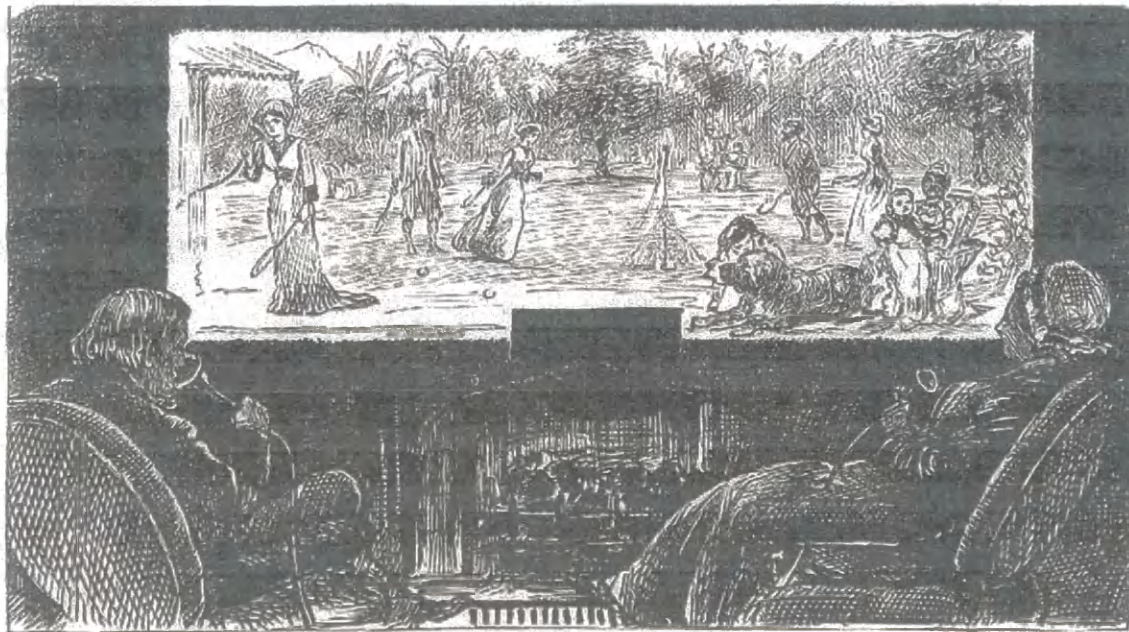
What is this invention, who invented it and why? Who's watching it, when, and how much? Who decides what should be on the air? How has programming changed in nearly 60 years of existence or has it? Just how good were the good old days?

HISTORY

Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone in 1876, and presented it to an unenthusiastic public. To generate interest and ultimately sales, he traveled around the country performing demonstrations of his newfangled gadget to the disinterested populace. In an effort to dazzle the audience, he would also share some of his ideas for the future of the telephone while insisting that every home needed one now. Claiming that he based the idea for the telephone on his study of the anatomy and physiology of the ear, could a similar study of the eye be far behind (Barnouw, p. 4)?

PUNCH'S ALMANACK FOR 1879.

13 December 9, 1878.



EDISON'S TELEPHONOSCOPE (TRANSMITS LIGHT AS WELL AS SOUND).

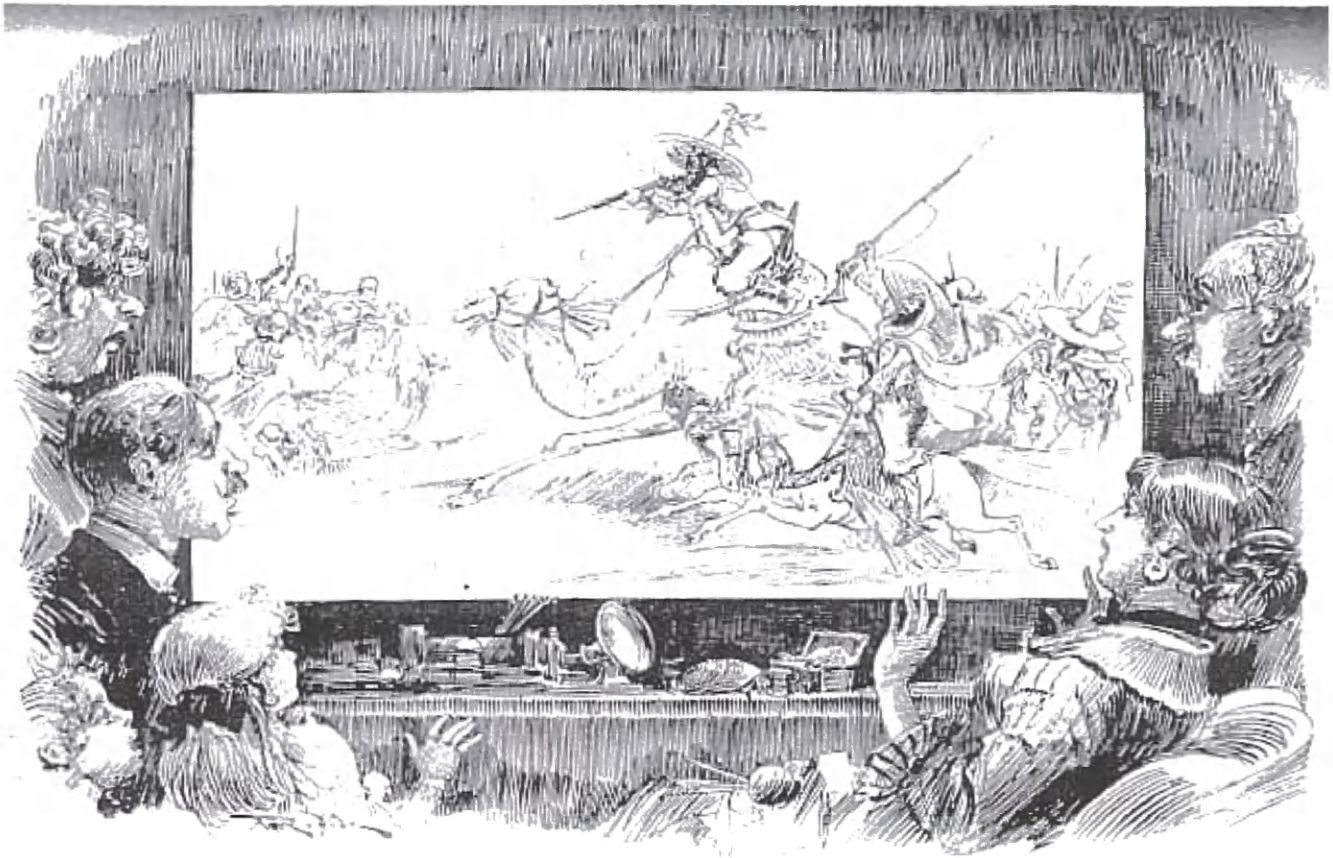
(Every evening, before going to bed, Papa and Mamma sit up in their electric chairs, looking over their electric spectacles, and gladden their eyes with the sight of their children at the Antipodes, and converse gaily with them through the wire.)

Telephonoscope (in Wilton Place). "BETTRICK, COME HERE, I WANT TO WHISPER." *Bettrick (from Capten).* "YES, PAPA HEAR!"
Telephonoscope. "WHO IS THAT CHARMING YOUNG LADY PLAYING ON CHARLIE'S SIDE?"
Matilda. "SHE'S JUST COME OVER FROM ENGLAND, PAPA. I'D INTRODUCE YOU TO HER AS SOON AS THE GAME'S OVER!"

Bell hinted that indeed he could envision a two-way phone that would let the speaker and the listener see each other on a small screen. The possibilities seemed endless and limited only by the imagination while bordering on the absurd.

By 1879, a *Punch* magazine cartoon by George du Maurier jokingly showed a couple seated in front of the hearth watching a tennis match on a wide screen mounted on the mantle. The viewers held two receivers that were attached to allow conversation with the players (Barnouw, p. 4). Bell was right, the possibilities were endless and the seeds were planted for a revolutionary new device.

In 1882, French artist Albert Robida drew cartoons with even more irrational predictions such as, families of the future would watch a distant war from the comfort of their living rooms. In his imagination, the screen on the wall would also allow people to take courses taught by a faraway teacher and it would enable the housewife to survey goods for sale and her husband to watch a girlie show – all from the comfort of home” (Barnuow, p. 4).



LE JOURNAL TÉLÉPHOSCOPIQUE

Telephonoscope

(<http://www.remyc.com/robida.html>)

The microphone was invented in 1876, a required piece for the efficient function of the telephone. The phonograph was invented in 1878, by Thomas Edison. He went on to invent the motion picture camera in 1895. Marconi invented the wireless in 1896, which evolved into radio. All of these components were required elements for the invention of television. Before the end of the nineteenth century, the pieces were in place for the most momentous apparatus as yet created by man.

In 1911, the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) was founded which combined the resources of the American Marconi Company, General Electric, Western Electric, AT&T and Westinghouse. Around 1923, at the Westinghouse laboratory in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Russian-born electrical engineer, Vladimir Zworykin (1889-1982), began tinkering with a kinescope or early television camera that was a type of cathode - ray tube (CRT) and iconoscope or “eye” of a camera. “Electronic television is based on the development of the CRT, which is the picture tube found in modern television sets. A CRT is a specialized vacuum tube in which images are produced when an electron beam strikes a phosphorescent surface,” (about.com). At a convention of radio engineers on November 18, 1929, Zworykin revealed his inventions (about.com).

RCA provided Zworykin with financial backing and a transmitter that was placed on top of the Empire State Building radiating 50-60 miles from New York City (Hubbell, p. 135). Zworykin continued to tinker with experimental television, however, without receivers, it was not commercially practical. Ten years later on April 30, 1939, television service began for the World’s Fair in New York City. President Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke at the fair, thus becoming the first U.S. President to appear on television (Hubbell, p. 136).

Court battles immediately ensued against the federal government regarding the technical requirements for broadcasting and receivers. RCA, DuMont, CBS, Zenith and Philco all wanted their sets to be the standard and

force the competition back to the drawing board. After many financial settlements, commercial telecasts began July 1, 1941. Between 1939-1941, only a few thousand sets were in use across the country. "Anything that moved was worth watching," (Brooks, Marsh, p. xi). NBC and CBS received their FCC licenses in 1941. Less than six months later, World War II began and television broadcasting was put on hold while workers and equipment concentrated on the war effort. DuMont did not receive a license until 1944, ABC in 1953. "There is no reason now apparent why we should not aim at a 50,000,000 set television industry mirroring the present 50,000,000 set standard [radio] broadcast industry," stated James Lawrence Fry, FCC Chairman in 1942 (Hubbell, p. xi).

NBC has the distinction of presenting the first commercial television broadcast on May 9, 1946, with a variety show called "Hour Glass" (Brooks, Marsh, p. xi).

By July of 1948, there were approximately 350,000 TV sets in use in the U.S., of which 261,000 were on the east coast with 130,500 around New York City. Only one in ten Americans had seen a TV set up to that point (www.tvhistory.tv).

In August of 1949, 2,000,000 sets were in use as a result of advertising, reducing the price of receivers and increasing the number of transmitting stations across the country. The Sears catalog offered a set for \$149.95 (average annual income in the U.S was \$3,600). A Pilot three-inch television was \$99.95 and used a ten-inch magnifying glass to increase the

picture size. DuMont's 20-inch set was on sale for \$999 (www.tvhistory.tv). According to one eyewitness, the reception by these sets left a lot to be desired. Often the picture would roll and roll for ten minutes or so and then stop, becoming crystal clear. This would draw whoops and hollers from the family and neighbors who were packed in the living room to watch this phenomenon. Then it would begin to roll again and repeat this drill throughout the evening. It was still an exhilarating experience and worth all of the grief (McInnis).

More than 5,000,000 sets were sold in 1950 (Pendergast, p. 627). September 1951, stands in history as the month and year that the nationwide TV link was completed. America had television from coast to coast. Every broadcast station regardless of size was affiliated with NBC, CBS or DuMont (Brooks, Marsh, p. xiv). "In the years immediately following World War II, television quickly became America's dominant medium, influencing, shaping and recording popular culture in a way no other media has ever equaled," (Pendergast, P. 627).

By the early 1960s, Americans watched forty hours of television per week and "...shows were tailored to create the mood advertisers thought would result in their consumers being the most amenable to their products," (Pendergast, p. 628). Soaps proffered cleaning products while sports sold razor blades, shaving cream and cigars. By 2004, it was projected that the average adult (18 years and older) would watch 1669 hours of television annually – or about thirty-two hours per week (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001),

down dramatically from the early 1960s due to video games and the Internet.

“Broadcasting in the United States is the creature of federal regulators,” (Comstock, p. 14). The federal government controls the licensure of television statements. “Behind licensing is the belief that the resources of a given community can be equitably and properly mined by a selected few,” (Comstock, p. 14). Programming is determined by popularity and popularity determines sponsors.

Todd Gitlin, prominent sociologist at UC Berkeley and former president of the Students for a Democratic Society in the 1960s, was quoted in *Evolution of American Television* to have concluded: “So the networks do just what they set out to do. They are not trying to stimulate us to thought or inspire us to belief or remind us of what it is to be human and live on earth in the late twentieth-century; what they are trying to do is ‘hook’ us,” [**Inside Primetime**, p. 334 (Comstock, p. 40)].

As Comstock observed, “There is no more clearly documented way in which television has altered American life than in the expenditure of time,” (Comstock, p. 41). When television viewing gained momentum in the 1950s, restaurants closed in the evening, theater attendance dropped, and taxi cabs had fewer fares as Americans stayed home to watch the tube, regardless of what was on. Sociologist Patrick Warwise and Andrew Ehrenberg were quoted in *Evolution of American Television* regarding their studies of American TV watching habits: “Principles of television viewing:

- Viewing is primarily a function of time available in the vicinity of an operable television set
- Program content will play a large part in choosing what to view, but the predominance of time over program availability means the major changes in the overall television schedule would not affect total audience size much
- The comparative and frequent (although certainly not invariable) predominance of time over program availability means that the decision to view television typically precedes the decision over what to view,” (Comstock, p. 46)

In other words, we watch or at least have the TV on in the background, even when we don't care what's on. This indicates that the television is more than entertainment; it's also a companion. It's a substitute for neighborly social interaction or gathering with the family. It has replaced physical activity by drawing viewers into the home and onto the couch. We are an obese nation with television sets mounted on our treadmills and exercise bikes.

We've also forgotten our manners along the way, Kottack observed that "...TV conditioned behavior—teleconditioning, stated simply, the pattern is this: Televiewing causes people to duplicate inappropriately in other areas of their lives, behavior styles developed while watching television, (Kottack, p. 3). Many baby boomers cannot read without background noise because the television has always been present in their lives and they are used to it. College students eat and speak in the classroom during the lectures because

it's much like the background noise of a television broadcast, which doesn't require respect and full attention.

Although some magazines have gone out of business since the birth of television, many others have begun publishing and are connected to the television industry: *People*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *TV Guide* and *Soap Opera Digest* to name a few.

Kottack noted that "TV content's impact on American culture enters the story when we consider that contemporary Americans share common information and experiences because of the programs they have seen," (Kottack, p. 5). This is referring to the "water cooler discussions" held around the world during working hours. "It is hardly trivial that the average American household has more television sets than bathrooms," (Kottack, p. 7).

Who's watching? According to the U.S. Census Bureau 2004 statistics: full-time working women with high school educations, ages 35-44 are watching the most – making them the primary consumers and most valuable to advertisers.

Total U.S. Population 2004 (18 years+): 213,454,000

(Numbers below indicate 1000 per - 27,556 equals 27,556,000 actual number)

<u>Reading %</u>		<u>TV Viewing %</u>	<u>Newspaper</u>
18-24 year olds	27,556	92.5	72.7
25-34 year olds	39,380	92.5	74.1
35-44 year olds	44,230	92.9	79.0
45-54 year olds	40,387	94.4	81.6
55-64 year olds	27,520	95.8	83.2
65 year olds +	34,381	97.2	81.6
Males	102,533	94.3	78.1
Females	110,921	94.0	79.4
Less than high school grad	35,023	93.6	61.2
High school grad	67,779	95.4	77.9
Attended college	57,820	95.4	82.3
College grad	52,832	92.5	87.0
Employed full time	113,475	93.4	80.7
Employed part time	23,165	92.5	80.1
Unemployed	76,815	95.7	75.4
Household income:			
less than \$10,000	13,326	93.5	62.2
\$10-19,999	22,029	93.9	69.2
\$20-29,999	24,350	94.9	72.1
\$30-34,999	12,224	94.6	78.9
\$35-39,999	11,290	95.1	76.9
\$40-49,999	21,118	95.2	77.2
\$50 or more	109,207	93.7	84.6

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2004)

Who decides what should air on television? How has it changed in the last 58 years? The answer to the first question is sponsors and program executives: one group who wants to buy time to sell products and the other group who wants to sell times to buy products. It's a symbiotic relationship made in advertising heaven.

The second question—how has it changed -- surprisingly the programming really hasn't. The messages have been tempered and the players have changed over the last 60 years, but the basic genres have not. We're going to look at a few of the original shows and trace their evolution to current day programming. The wildly popular soap opera maintained its footing and also evolved into reality shows. The game show is a form of variety show that stemmed from vaudeville and presented itself early on with *Beat the Clock* and *Uncle Miltie*. Melodramas that extolled the virtues of westerns created the patriarchal atmosphere with clearly defined good guys and bad guys that is alive and well in dramas like *Law and Order*. The lovable situation comedy, a genuine television creation is staggering now in the ratings for the first time, but there are signs that it could make a comeback. News shows have expanded to include the vast entertainment and sports industries and has it always been about the ratings? Lastly, children's programming was there in the beginning with *Romper Room* and *Captain Kangaroo* and begs us to ask: did we create a cookie monster by addicting our children to the tube at a young age?

We will look at the evolution in the line-up to determine the changes and consistencies in each format: soaps, game/variety shows, melodramas, situation comedies, news and children's entertainment.

SOAP OPERAS

75 Years and Counting

A popping and crackling noise emanated from the large wooden box in the front room of the house as the dial on the box's face lit up with ascending numbers. The knob turned left and right, finally focused on a sound that snapped, croaked, and cleared. The listener leaned forward in anticipation. Organ music burst forth with a few familiar bars. The smooth as honey announcer's voice crooned that "it's almost time—please stay tuned for this broadcast..."

Soap operas are a uniquely American cultural phenomenon and successfully made the crossover into television. What makes a show a soap? Story telling in serial chapters is the defining quality. Rather than tied neatly in 30 or 60 minutes, the loose ends of the story can extend for weeks, months or years. Romance is also a cornerstone of the soap. Another characteristic is that the actors change by aging, dying or changing position in the show. The show itself never ages and doesn't air reruns. Overall, this genre has survived economic depressions, downturns, changes of venue and the passage of time. For example, *The Guiding Light* has been listened to or watched since 1937. Millions and millions have tuned in to soaps over the last 75 years. They started as a serial at a small radio station in Chicago—a station that was trying to fill air time with a product that would generate revenue.

A serial in literature is a story told in installments without a finite ending date; it could last weeks, months or in some cases, years. Charles Dickens used the serial genre in sequential magazines and newspapers employing cliffhangers, plot twists and interesting characters to keep readers begging for more in return for payment and increased revenue. Later the movies added serials to the beginning of each feature film to keep viewers coming back. It was a teaser that entertained and brought in the crowd. There were serial westerns (*The Lone Ranger*), serial melodramas (*The Perils of Pauline*) and serial sci fi/fantasies (*Flash Gordon*) to appeal to all groups. According to Wikipedia, "In recent times, the term has been used for a radio or television production with a continuously evolving, unified plot and set of characters spread over multiple episodes and sometimes years (see e.g., soap opera)." The unity of plot and contiguity across numerous episodes distinguishes a radio or television serial from a radio or television series. This should be remember as soap operas of television are examined from an academic perspective: their history, impact and reason for longevity.

Looking back, soap operas are deeply rooted in the history of radio. Commercial radio caught on with the American public in the early 1920s after Westinghouse Corporation executive, Harry P. Davis, learned that the "wireless concerts" broadcast from the garage of Frank Conrad, a Westinghouse employee, were gaining an audience in the Pittsburgh area. A local department store advertised wireless radio sets that could pick up Conrad's signal from several miles away. Davis later wrote, "[the ad] caused the thought to come to me that the efforts that were then being made to

develop radio-telephony as a confidential means of communication were wrong; and that instead, its field was really one of wide publicity; in fact, the only means of instantaneous collective communication ever devised” (Czitrom, pp. 70-71). Westinghouse quickly got into broadcasting as well as the manufacturing of receivers and parts. The rage swept the nation. For the remainder of the 1920s, programming included comedies, varieties, children’s hours, documentaries, popular music and news/comments (Czitrom, p. 84). On October 20, 1930, the modern soap opera was born at WGN radio in Chicago.

First known as serial dramas, soap operas got their nickname from the soap products sold by detergent sponsors and opera from the art form that “attracted the educated elite” (Allen, p.9). Irna Phillips (1901-1973) was considered the mother of the soap. Employed at WGN, Phillips was asked to write ten scripts for a daytime serial involving an Irish woman, her daughter, her daughter’s friend and the boarders in the household as well as guests. Phillips wrote the scripts and called the series, *Painted Dreams*.

She felt immediately that they were on to something. “There was very little entertainment for women who were home during the day” (Buckman, p. 20). Reading was out of the question with the average housewife tied down with one to five kids to watch over. More importantly, all of these women also bought products for their homes, clothes for their families and food for the table. Phillips knew this and demanded control of the scripts she had written which originally fell on deaf ears at the corporate level.

No sponsor had been contracted for *Painted Dreams* and the station manager had hoped that with enough exposure and audience interest, someone would be willing to pay the production costs. Shortly before cancellation, Montgomery Ward, then a catalog giant, came forward and sponsored the show for a year. During that time the daughter in the show was married off and she ultimately purchased various appliances and items for her new home thus creating the advertising vehicle to showcase Montgomery Ward products. Lawsuits over the ownership of the scripts ensued and Phillips left WGN. She showed up at a competing radio station within the year and using the same format, created *Mother Moran* for which General Foods became the sponsor. Phillips began to build her empire. She refused to become an employee of the radio station or the sponsor and remained an independent contractor with full production rights. Her methods worked. As of 2004, only two soaps (*Passions* and *General Hospital*) of the nine on the air have no ties to the Phillips legacy (Allen, p. 59).

Phillips was brilliant in this medium and figured out how to get what she wanted and what she wanted was more advertisers. Using a method known as “mailhook,” she could gauge the size and location of the listening audience. One mailhook asked listeners to write in and request a picture of the cast. Another mailhook was buried within the script and sent a plea to the audience to buy LaFrance detergent to save the sales job of one of the fictional characters. These two devices provided Phillips with the names of listeners and their geographic locations from the postmark on the postcard. The increased sales indicated the number of listeners overall. She could take

this information back to the sponsor and project impact, sales and audience size and that translated into revenue dollars.

Pillsbury later sponsored the show and moved it to NBC national radio in late 1933. National broadcasting exploded with the soap opera genre. Pillsbury also employed mailhooks and had one that offered a brochure with the show's history in exchange for a flour label. More than 250,000 labels were received in a few weeks. Again, addresses were obtained and volume was quantified.

Proctor and Gamble was watching all of this activity. In 1832, Proctor and Gamble (P&G) was made up of two men married to sisters. Candlemaking was their primary business thus creating soap and lard as secondary items from the production of tallow (Goodrum, p. 47). Folks at that time were concocting homemade soap from cooking grease and wood ashes. The invention of Ivory in 1878, ("the soap that floats") by P&G researchers established it as their primary moneymaker. Ivory was white and therefore pure, nicely cut and scented versus the yellow or gray homemade blob. Advertising of this product added to its popularity causing citizens to rethink their hygiene habits. In the late 1800s, "Americans scarcely [bathed] at all, mainly from reluctance to be seen in the nude" (Goodrum, p. 50).

As Proctor and Gamble increased advertising for Ivory and other laundry products, Americans bathed and washed their clothes more frequently. Proctor and Gamble grew rapidly and became the dominant figure in laundry products by the 1920s. Their marketing specialists saw radio advertising as a way to reach the entire country since newspapers were limited to a certain

geographical readership and magazines subscriptions had postage costs added on, but the air waves were limitless (Goodrum, p. 54).

P&G felt that if women heard entertaining programming while performing chores, sales would increase by association. P&G sponsored *Ma Perkins*, an original idea from Irna Phillips in the summer of 1933, (Allen, p. 115). If the characters became friends to the housewives while they did their chores, if they identified with the characters, certainly they would take the advice of the characters and buy P&G products rather than an item from Colgate or Palmolive. Of course, this was pure and simple brainwashing, but in a nice entertaining way. An excerpt of the *Ma Perkins* serial illustrates the trust and authority generated by the velvety voiced, baritone announcer:

And here's Oxydol's own Ma Perkins again. The true-life story of a woman whose life is the same, whose surroundings are the same, whose problems are the same as those of thousands of other women in the world today. A woman who has spent all of her life taking care of her home: washing and cooking and cleaning and raising her family. And now her husband's death has pitched her head-foremost into being the head of her family as well as the mother. And we'll hear her true-life story every day at this time; except Saturday and Sunday. Before we hear from Ma Perkins today, though, I want to tell you about something else for a minute that will be of vital interest to every housewife listening; about a remarkable new laundry-soap discovery that... (Allen, p. 115).

Who wouldn't believe these people? The characters are just like us. They are struggling, suffering, and trying to do their best in a tough world. If they want you to buy their soap, why not, don't you have to buy someone's soap? Fans around the country identified with the trials and tribulations of the

characters on the radio soaps. Even housewives in isolated communities could feel that they were not alone. These broadcasts provided company and sharing as well as an element of voyeurism and escapism that broke up the monotony of household drudgery. The average woman in the 1930s spent nearly 60 hours a week performing household chores which included cooking, ironing, washing and scrubbing (Allen, p. 60). The broadcasts also created an atmosphere where one could feel superior, the “at least my life is better than hers” attitude (Allen, p 115). It is part of the American culture that we think it’s important that we are not at the bottom of the barrel, that we are better off than “Brenda Starr” or “Ma Perkins.”

In early 1934, to test whether or not the message was getting through to the fans, P&G devised a mailhook where listeners would receive a packet of flower seeds in exchange for one dime and one box top from Oxydol. More than one million requests were received. P&G validated that sponsoring a soap was the most cost effective advertising plan they had ever had.

Although the Great Depression had been in effect for several years and the nation was suffering it’s highest unemployment rates in history, radio advertising “rocketed more than 300 percent” by the mid 1930s (Advertising Age, pp. 34-35) as a result of daytime programming.

In 1934, *McCall’s* magazine asked 1,000 New Jersey housewives to name their “most essential household appliances.” The results were the iron at 68.9 percent; radio at 64.4 percent; vacuum cleaner at 63.3 percent; and icebox at 38.0 percent (Allen p. 130). The radio also changed in physical design to smaller models that could be placed on a kitchen counter or shelf.

No longer were they the large wooden pieces of furniture relegated to the living room. They were now companions in the part of the house where the housewife most likely spent her time. By 1935, households with radios ranged from 78-88 percent and half of that number were tuned in before 6 p.m. (Cox, p. 3). Before 6 p.m., more than 200 soaps were on the air. The average listener was "...18 to 35, female, middle class, high school educated and lived in a rural setting," (*Broadcasting*, p. 193). Soap operas provided the "single most important programming phenomena of the decade" (Czitrom, p. 85).

The soaps comprised nearly 60 percent of all daytime shows by 1940. At that time, the average listener regularly listened to 6.6 different series (Czitrom, p. 85). The subject matter tended to be about births, weddings, and deaths—three things everyone could identify with. As the soaps and their followers matured, more topics were added: infidelity, lost loves and hotter romance.

Not long before World War II, there were 64 daytime serials each and every week, 52 weeks a year. Some were daily half hour shows, some were weekly one hour episodes. Soap operas became so important that P&G continued to advertise Dreft detergent during wartime to remain competitive and maintain product recognition even though the sale of it and other synthetic detergents had been suspended for the duration of the war (Museum of Broadcast Communications or www.museum.tv/archives).

As the power and far reaching effects of soap operas were firmly established, an academic look at the genre began. Radio originally was

hoped to be for adult education, but focused more on entertainment and selling products (Morris, p. 466). It had promised enlightenment, but that quickly changed. Criticism ran high because it failed to deliver “constructive social good” (Morris, p. 467).

In March of 1942, Dr. Louis Berg, a New York psychiatrist, went to the press with his own research results attesting that soaps “pandered to perversity” (Allen, p. 22). He claimed that soaps raised blood pressure, caused increased perspiration and a rapid heart rate. He felt that wartime radio should be used for other programming to help the effort. After some investigation by the media, it was found that Dr. Berg was using his own symptoms that were registered while he tuned in to the radio. His study was deemed completely false (Allen, p. 22).

Noted playwright Merrill Dennison wrote an article about soaps in the April 1940 issue of *Harper's*. He stated that, “When one understands the entirely mechanical and cynical technics which have been perfected for the manufacture of these radio shows and when one considers the whole-hearted acceptance with which millions of women listen to them, one cannot help wondering what would happen were the same technics used to serve political ends rather than the relatively harmless ones of promoting the sale of soap, breakfast foods and tooth pastes,” (Dennison). He has a point, but America is a market driven capitalist economy and soap operas delivered the goods desired by the advertisers. In the early 1940s, less than 40 percent of Americans brushed their teeth (Advertising Age, pp. 34-35). At the close of the decade, nearly 100 percent performed the ritual at least twice a day

(Matelski, p. 40). That's concrete evidence of the power and influence of advertising.

The postwar years brought dynamic changes in our culture and technology. Advertising brought slices of American culture into the living rooms and kitchens creating a common bond across the land (Samuel p. 70). Throughout the war years, Americans had to scrimp and save and make do. Once the war was over, advertisers to sell their products spawned the "American Dream". And saturate the market they did. The end of WWII "marked the true beginning of mass consumption as we know it," (Kammen p. 19).

Winston Churchill was credited with stating that "Advertising nourishes the consuming power of men. It sets up before a man the goal of a better home, better clothing, better food for himself and his family. It spurs individual exertion and greater production," (Ogilvy, p. 150). By 1948, the ten highest rated daytime programs were all soap operas and high ratings mean high advertising dollars spent and high sales to follow.

One of the finest critiques of advertising and its connection to soap operas ever to hit the mainstream is a movie titled, *A Letter to Three Wives*, released by 20th Century Fox in 1949. It reflects the critical sentiment of America in the post WWII years. Written and directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, the movie examines the changes in American life as women joined the workforce and tended less and less to be full time wives and mothers. The pursuit of the American Dream had caused the destruction of the American family as it was known only a few years before. Describing a neighborhood, the character

Addie Ross states, "This is that street where people on the way up and on the way down live alongside each other for a while." Having been saturated by commercials for years, Mankiewicz wrote this screenplay with a jaundiced eye on the advertising industry. "Restful it ain't," the character Sadie states about the jingles on the kitchen radio. George Phipps, in response to his wife's insistence that everything be "perfect" for their guests, states, "Why does everything have to be full when guests arrive? Full cigarette boxes, candy dishes, fresh cakes of soap. Aren't we supposed to smoke, eat or wash when we're alone?" George is a high school English teacher and often offended by what he hears on the airwaves, something he calls, "radio English." His wife, Rita, writes a radio soap opera. "Please, no jokes about radio. I'm afraid they don't have much of a sense of humor about it," Rita implores [the dinner guests are the producers of Rita's soap opera]. "Oh, neither have I. The time for joking about it [radio] has passed. Radio has become a very serious problem now, like juvenile delinquency," George replies sarcastically.

The producers arrive for dinner and Mrs. Manley, the outspoken member of the production team states, "Sadie may not realize it, but whether or not she thinks she's listening, she's being penetrated. After penetration comes saturation. When she's saturated, she'll find herself saying, 'Madam, I suggest you buy...'" And thus sums up how advertising operates. George later states,

The purpose of radio writing as far as I can see is to prove to the masses that a deodorant can bring happiness; a mouthwash guarantees success and a

laxative attracts romance. 'Worry says the radio.' Will your best friends not tell you? Will you lose your teeth? Will your cigarettes give you cancer? Will your body function after you're 35? If you don't use our product, you'll lose your husband, your job, and die. Use our product and we'll make you rich and make you famous.

Thomas Burns, film specialist and senior editor at Thomson Gale agreed to watch *A Letter to Three Wives* and share his opinion with me. When asked if he saw post WWII America any differently, he stated,

Yes. Since I so often associate the time period with Frank Capra's American can-do spirit kinds of movies, I was surprised at how sophisticated and complex the relationships were, particularly between the married couples. Previously, I had never seen a movie of that period that acknowledged the subversive pervasiveness of advertising, which is a pretty common theme in films today. Kirk Douglas's (George Phipps) speech about radio advertising was such an eye-opener. There's this very clean and tidy image of 1940s American advertising - pleasant jingles, the Texaco men running out to fill up a car, etc., that has always made the commercialism of the time period seem almost genteel. Douglas's speech hit home that advertising then is the same as it is now and it was so satisfying to see someone of that era rail against appealing to the lowest common denominator.

Mr. Burns went on to state that radio "...allowed corporate synergy to creep into your living room."

As the 1940s slipped away, television was on the horizon. As 1950 progressed, it was not clear whether or not soaps could migrate to the new medium as television required visual attention (Museum of Broadcast Communications). *The Guiding Light* made the crossover in 1952. It also remained on the radio until 1956. The episodes were first broadcast on the radio at 12:45 and then on television at 1:45. Fans could choose their medium since the same scripts were used for both. Although television

productions were more costly, America was in love with TV and advertisers jumped on the bandwagon to have their products represented. Television also allowed viewers to see the sets, the fashions, and the actors. It enhanced the genre and made the increased cost well worth it.

Although many women held jobs during WWII, they had been expected to return home once the men had returned from war. Many of the housewives of the 1950s were bored and isolated. They welcomed the distraction of the serial dramas on their new television sets” (BookRags.com).

The love affair with television was also evidenced in the “...drop in attendance at movies, libraries, sporting events, restaurants and in taxi cabs (Allen, p. 125). As one eyewitness attests, “I stopped playing with my friends after school so I could watch television. It didn’t seem like a sacrifice at all,” (Andrews).

Finally, in 1960, TV replaced radio soaps. Radio was changing in response to the lessening demand and local music format was gaining air time. Television was far more complicated and required a large production crew, cameramen, sound specialists and lots of actors—no longer could one actor do double duty.

Television story lines continued to broaden and subjects were examined in depth over several weeks. New writers brought new ideas and became a training ground for the best of the best. Because the soaps are a never-ending story, the writers come and go as the grind crushes them. They cranked out five scripts a week, 52 weeks a year (Intinoli, p. 125). This resulted in fresh ideas, new characters and an ever-changing story line.

Soaps survived the television quiz show scandals of 1960 without a scratch. Revlon cosmetics was accused of rigging *The \$64,000 Question* to make the outcome more entertaining. Congress investigated and the FCC made a formal inquiry. As a result, the networks took programming away from sponsors for the public good. Advertisers were allowed to participate with other sponsors during one program which meant that there was a mad scramble to fill commercial spots. This affected all programming except soaps because the soaps were owned outright by their main sponsors, (Intintoli, p. 127).

The 1970s saw women joining the workforce in record numbers. Made up primarily of baby boomers, no one was staying home to watch the tube. To stem the loss of viewers, younger characters, hipper story lines and career women were woven into the scripts. Ratings soared again.

All My Children debuted in 1970, and cornered 15-20 million fans with it's younger cast and cutting edge stories. It was also placed later in the afternoon to catch high school girls as they arrived home. Again, others followed the trend. "The soap format allows social issues to be examined over a period of months, tracing causes and consequences," (www.mtr.org). Teenage sexuality was portrayed and the establishment of the Ryans as the first immigrant, working class family at the center of a daytime drama, *Ryan's Hope* premiered in 1975. The 1970s also introduced the prime time soap opera, *Dallas* with the shot heard 'round the world. "Who Shot J.R." remained the most watched television episode for some twenty years.

In 1982, 25 million people of whom more than 80% were female, watched soaps, (Cantor, p. 125). Cantor stated, "The soap opera is important as a form of popular culture and as an economic commodity" (Cantor, p. 11). Introducing traumas that are reflective of our culture, soaps have covered alcoholism, loss of mental health, juvenile delinquency; terminal illness, divorce, impotence, birth control, drug abuse, homosexuality, sexual freedom, sexually transmitted diseases, romance, dating, marriage, rape, incest, murder, minority representation and AIDS. With the daily format, up-to-the minute cures, procedures and treatments can be integrated into the dialogue. "Soaps can approximate real time more closely than other narrative forms in the culture and for some time now even celebrations of holidays occur on the holidays because of the five days/week schedule" (Stark, p. 205). "This is a genre that built its success on generational viewing," said Angela Shapiro, the president for the ABC Daytime division, (*The New York Times*). Also, with five hours of programming a week and no deadline, topics can be examined in depth. "Plots which can devote six weeks instead of 60 seconds to a subject like infertility or substance abuse serve a dual educational and support function for viewers," (Stark, p. 208).

Prime time soaps increased in number and were geared to women not home during the day. *Dynasty*, *Beverly Hills 90210*, *Knot's Landing*, and *Melrose Place* were enormously popular and stayed in the top ten of the ratings. It also became socially acceptable for men to watch since this was definitely not daytime programming.

The 1990s introduced “reality” shows during prime time and garnered a huge following. *Cops* is Fox’s reality show that was a hit before the genre was cool. This show has brought in an estimated \$500 million from network syndication, cable and DVD sales since its inception in 1990 (*Broadcasting and Cable*). *Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire*, also topped the ratings charts using the same cornerstone as a soap opera: a little romance and the union of a man and woman. *Real World* followed seven people to probe their lifestyles, relationships and reactions week after week.

The 2000s have spawned reality shows like *Survivor*, *Bachelorette*, *The Bachelor* and *The Apprentice*, to name a few. “We wanted to shoot the show like a soap opera,” explained Lisa Levenson, the co-executive producer of *The Bachelor* series and a former producer of *General Hospital*. The principal ingredient is developing characters that viewers can relate to, or watch and thinking “at least I’m not as screwed up as that person,” (*The New York Times*, 2/22/03). “During the week of April 5, 2005, four of the top five shows were reality fare,” (*Advertising Age*, 5/3/04). The reality shows helped network television fight the migration of viewers to cable where sex and drama are bolder and more cutting edge.

To this day, nothing has been found to be more effective in reaching women 18-49. Reality shows which are the direct descendant of soaps, are ratings bonanzas, and appeal to men as well as women. There’s romance, a spotlight on relationships and we get to follow them week after week in a serial manner as they build on the previous episode. Sounds like a soap and wins in the ratings like a soap. Soaps were initially meant for women and

based on romance in some form and although they have matured, romance is still evident. Because reality shows air in the evening, they are more acceptable to the male gender. Reality shows share the serial quality; stories told through a series of “individual, narratively linked installments” (*Museum of Broadcast Communications*) and depth of topic discussion. Since each episode is not freestanding and it is required that history or knowledge of the program is required, the viewer feels compelled to watch every episode so they are not “left out.” Pleasure is derived from being informed as relationships evolve and situations change. Knowing where the characters came from can give the impression of knowing where they will go. As relationships between characters deepen and expand, the viewer is included. As with any interactive activity, the amount the viewer wishes to invest, to involve herself/himself, is purely a personal decision. It’s a genre that will have you as a member regardless of your gender, income, heritage or intellect. Soaps are still on during the day all around the world – and the only difference is that now the prime time hours also have reality shows. If reality shows aired before 6 p.m., they would be called soap operas.

Will they survive another 75 years? Yes, as long as people want to feel connected, want to watch how others handle situations, want to learn and want to be entertained. They appeal to our voyeuristic nature. The soaps adapt readily to changes in culture, fashion, politics and language. You can “google” soap opera and find:

1. Most newspapers run a recap of the week’s episodes.
2. There is a Soap Network on cable TV that reruns episodes of current soaps as well as those from the 1970s and 1980s.

3. There are more than 24 soap opera magazines available online and at the newsstand.
4. There are 912 hits to “soap opera” on the Internet.
5. Each popular, currently running soap also has a companion web sites with actor profiles, history and upcoming events.
6. There are more than 60 soap web sites on the Internet with 2,260,000 related links.
7. Theme music downloads are available.

Few programs have withstood the test of time. If soaps didn't evolve with our cultural advances, they would be relics and frozen somewhere in the past. Instead, they are current, trend setting, reflective, cutting-edge and comforting—all at the same time. Yes, they will survive another 75 years. At least.

GAME SHOWS

Scandals, Scouts and Scalawags

"I think game shows have lasted so long because they are basically feel-good television," Jeopardy host, Alex Trebek (Lasswell, p. 64).

Fun, entertaining and occasionally educational, quiz shows and post scandal namesake, game shows, have deep roots in American radio. In the 1920s, *Pop the Question Game* aired with a little-known host named Mark Goodson. *The Brunswick Hour Musical Memory Contest*, *The Radio Digest*, *Do You Know?* and *Ask Me Another* were all popular right through the 1930s. The Depression years showed additional interest in game shows because radio was a constant companion establishing itself as the most popular form of entertainment in our culture. That fact that it was free to listen while it encouraged the American dream of riches and fame was a bonus (Pendergast, p. 191).

Quiz shows and game shows generally fall into three categories. The first is the panel game show which is usually made up of a celebrity panel who questions a guest either to guess their secret as in *I've Got A Secret* or determine their occupation as in *What's My Line* or the panel plays it strictly for laughs like they joyously did in *The Match Game*. The panel game show is pure entertainment and not meant to stretch the imagination or the intellect of the viewer.

A quiz show is where non-celebrities compete against each other by answering questions or solving puzzles. Celebrities may be involved as in *\$25,000 Pyramid* or *Password*, but the intention is still to have non-celebrities winning the cash or merchandise. The stunt show is a variation of the quiz show, but involves the participants in stunts, gags or physical endurance rather than intellectual challenge as in *Beat the Clock*.

Last is the reality show which debuted in the 1950s with *Ted Mack's Amateur Hour* and continues today as *American Idol* or *Amazing Race*. The premise of this genre is non-celebrity competition that can go on for weeks or months until there is one final winner. Some of these shows are interactive and involve the television viewing audience whose responsibility is to vote for their favorite, not necessarily the most talented. This concept is the modern version of the applause meter used in the 1950s.

Quiz/Game shows have always been a mirror of society's interests and as they crossed over from radio to television, this became more evident. After World War II, when our society was immersed in "conspicuous consumption," game shows seemed to serve as a countermeasure to the years of war rationing and "injured psyches" suffered by Americans at home and overseas (Pendergast, p. 193).

In 1948, the four major radio networks (NBC, CBS, ABC and Mutual) gave away \$90,000 a week in merchandise spread over 54 game shows. This totaled \$4.5 million by the end of the year (Pendergast, p. 193). The American Dream was promoted with merchandise, cash, jewelry and even new homes.

The basics of the game show had been established in radio as well as the audience with more than 77,568,000 listeners in this country. The transition to television was simple and sets were built, and the audiences were invited to participate. There was a certain element of familiarity with many of the radio emcees continuing their careers in the new medium: Bud Collyer, Bert Parks, Jack Barry, Johnny Olson, Bill Cullen and Ralph Edwards, to name a few, were highly successful on radio and handsome enough to be televised. Often, these early shows were simulcast on radio for those who did not have broadcast bands yet available or for those without television receivers (sets).

Contestants usually wanted something for nothing and viewers loved to watch. The dynamic team of Mark Goodson (former radio host) and Bill Todman (game show writer) joined together to create some of the best game shows ever to air on television (bio.com). Goodson was the creative genius and Todman was the business genius. Goodson came up with the idea for a buzzer or a bell to be used as a prop and that is now considered standard fare. He also devised the concept of a champion returning to defend his title. Even some of the slang in the American language can be traced to the game shows of Goodson and Todman. "Is it bigger than a breadbox?" (Steve Allen, *What's My Line*) "C'mon down," Johnny Olson, *The Price is Right*; and the endless double entendres of *The Match Game*.

In 1950, the duo developed *What's My Line* (WML) which was the first weekly game show to air during prime time (Sunday nights at 9:30), where it stayed for 17 years before slipping into syndication. WML was a sophisticated and erudite game show replete with panelists dressed for an

after-the-show, upper east side Manhattan cocktail party. Watching the show was akin to being invited to the “who's who” of New York stage and screen. The four celebrity panelists had to suffer through guessing the unusual occupations of two to three guests every week until they were joined by the one celebrity surprise guest who would bring the panel to life with attempts to disguise their identity. Host John Charles Daly, who doubled as an ABC news anchor in the evening, entertained with his poise, impeccable charm and precise articulation.

Beat the Clock, which was pure vaudeville complete with sight gags and physical stunts, was another from the Goodson-Todman stable. *The Name's the Same*, *I've Got a Secret*, *To Tell the Truth*, *Password*, *The Price is Right*, *Say When!!*, *Card Sharks*, *Concentration*, *Family Feud*, and *The Match Game* are just a few of their terrific hits. The shows from Goodson-Todman were never insulting and always engaging, well thought out and readily welcomed into America's living rooms.

The shows also had a tendency to appeal to those who had been cashing in on the GI Bill and returning to college (Pendergast, p. 193). In 1940, at the height of radio game shows, only 24% of Americans had a high school diploma and less than 5% held a college degree. By 1948, enrollment in universities had exploded and the demand was for shows that emphasized intellect and talent (www.mediahistory.umn.edu).

Not surprisingly, since 1972, at least one Mark Goodson game show has been on daytime television every single weekday in the United States (imdb.com) in a first-run format, not reruns.

As the situation comedy was gaining popularity, some game shows easily groomed their shows to include more laughs. *You Bet Your Life* hosted by comedian Groucho Marx offered a platform to exercise his wit and comic timing while asking a few questions and offering prizes if the contestant uttered a secret word.

Interestingly during early television, there was one daytime game show that did not involve answering questions or watching celebrity panelists banter. *Queen For A Day* (QFAD) broke the rules. QFAD had been on the radio since 1945, joining the television family in January of 1956 (McNeil, p. 680). “QFAD did not showcase the intellect of the common man, but instead spotlighted and exploited the financial and emotional burdens of the common woman – an early form of mass media therapy and confessional that presaged the daytime TV talk shows of the 80s and 90s,” (Pendergast, p. 193).

“Do YOU want to be queen for a day?” was the opening of each program to which the audience would answer a resounding, “YES.” Four women, each with a heart-wrenching story would spend the next 30 minutes explaining to host Jack Bailey why their situation was the saddest and what they needed to make their lives more bearable. The studio audience chose the winner by applauding and the “applause meter” measured the response. The winner would accept her prizes and wear a sable trimmed, red velvet robe and bejeweled crown for the remaining ninety seconds of the show. Pepsodent was the proud sponsor of QFAD.

In response to the shows that required needy persons to compete with their saddest tales of woe, *New York Times* critic Jack Gould was quoted as stating that the shows, “callously exploit human anxiety to sell the product of a soap manufacturer and does it with a saccharine solicitude that hits the jackpot in bad taste.” Little did Mr. Gould realize, television game shows would plunge even further into the depths of depravity in just a few short years and label themselves as “daytime talk.”

Game shows were inexpensive to produce and very very profitable, since every dollar of cost was rewarded with fifteen dollars of profit (Himmelstein, p. 274). The shows were also lauded as a legitimate celebration of the American spirit and celebrated capitalism and the American way of life (Himmelstein, p 274). This still holds true today in the 21st Century.

Once they had invaded daytime programming and proved their success, game/quiz shows marched into the powerful (in terms of advertising dollars and exposure) evening hours. Utilizing the returning champion format to heighten suspense, the prime time audience created folk heroes out of the winners. These heroes were equal parts intellectual and common, everyday man (Pendergast, p. 193). It was an opportunity to buy into the American Dream for 30 minutes per episode.

In an effort to increase ratings, *The \$64,000 Question* and *Twenty-One* were accused of coaching the performance of their contestants and supplying the correct answers. Both evening shows were produced by Jack Barry and Dan Enright, and pitted contestants against each other week after week. The winners had to return and risk their earnings in order to double the amount

they had already won. Only three months after *The \$64,000 Question* premiered on television, half of the television sets in the country were tuned in. The sponsor, Revlon, had sales soaring 50%,” (Stark, p. 73). Geritol was the sponsor for *Twenty-One* and they made it clear to producers that they wanted a hit to showcase their product.

A former winner on *Twenty-One* claimed to journalists that he was “forced to take a dive” when he had become unpopular in the ratings after several weeks (Pendergast, p. 194) on *Twenty-One*. As a result, there was an investigation by the FCC in 1959. One of the contestants testified to a Senate Committee about the cheating and coaching. The viewing public was apathetic, but rival mediums (newspapers and radio) judged the findings very harshly (Stark, p. 73). Newspapers decried the scandal and asked, “what is wrong with the American Character? Are we a nation of liars and cheats?” (Stark, p. 73).

“It was a terrible thing to do,” said President Dwight D. Eisenhower, “to the American people,” (Stark, p. 73). Fines were paid, quiz shows called themselves game shows forever after and nothing else changed. Truthfully, the quiz show scandal was the first lie television had forced on the unsuspecting American public. Americans were not that naïve or innocent, but they weren't accustomed to being lied to on such a grand scale. Television had been treated with the same respect and honor as newspapers and radio news, but in reality, the shows were scripted and rehearsed and felt no obligation to present the truth.

Today we would be suspicious that the charges leveled against *Twenty-One* were actually racist or antisemitic in origin and not based on greed. It was the story of exploited stereotype in the form of class and race as the handsome and elegant WASP from a family of famous scholars defeated the underachieving and volatile, unattractive Jewish nerd from Queens.

As the 1960s emerged as a decade of cultural revolution, television game shows reflected these changes. *Jeopardy* was introduced as “television's fortress of knowledge,” and reinforced the concept of “may the smartest person win.” It was also called “the truest, purest test of general knowledge on the air today,” (Lasswell, p. 64). The premise was simple: answers were given and questions had to be devised. No doubt this was in response to the quiz show scandals of a few years before. The show was so popular, it expanded to the evening hours as well as daytime.

Another show of the 1960s, was Monty Hall's *Let's Make A Deal* (*LMAD*) which required no skill whatsoever, much like today's *Deal Or No Deal*. *LMAD* required that contestants in the studio audience wear eye-catching costumes to garner the attention of host Hall. Once chosen, these contestants, relying solely on their own greed, could take their winnings and “trade up” using their skills of chance and ability to randomly select the correct hidden prize. Exalting the “spectacle of greed and narcissism, *LMAD* celebrates sloth and chance, rather than hard work,” (Himmelstein, p. 255). Viewers loved to watch greedy contestants fail on *LMAD*. Criticizing *LMAD* for its sexual innuendos and greed, sociologist, Karl E. Meyer, referred to it as “the epiphany of greed,” (Meyer). “You tell me,” said an executive producer of

LMAD, “why a doctor who makes \$150,000 a year paints himself from butt to navel like the Jolly Green Giant, stands outside in that line in that cold for an hour and a half to win what that he can't afford to buy if he wants it?” (Himmelstein, p. 120). Yet the show was a hit in the ratings and stayed on for years.

Chuck Barris brought game shows to a new low. Considered the P.T. Barnum of modern television entertainment, Barris “revealed a disdain for authentic human relations,” and made a fortune sharing his views with shows like *The Dating Game* and *The Newlywed Game* (Himmelstein, p. 264). Barris's shows admitted openly that people think about sex and indulge in sex whether they were married or not. No other show had been so brazen or lusty. This appealed to the spontaneity and voyeurism that Americans had learned to enjoy in the turbulent 1960s. Barris had “destroyed the notion that avoiding self-gratification was a virtue,” (Stark, p. 120).

Barris's shows provided a therapeutic catharsis and became an early form of tabloid television where the goal was to tell all. Double entendres and frank seduction were a big part of *The Dating Game*. Example:

Bachelorette: Bachelor #1, what nationality are you?

Bachelor #1: Well, my father is Welsh and my mother is Hungarian which makes me well-hung.

Newspapers and journals criticized Barris and his shows. Audiences continued to watch. He introduced *The Gong Show* (GS) which was a combination of the 1950s *Ted Mack Amateur Hour* and today's *American Idol*.

GS featured contestants, thirsty for television exposure, making absolute fools of themselves for their fifteen minutes of fame and possible fortune. Barris's work may be summed up as the "purest form of exploitation of one's fellow human beings – that which preys upon their feelings of insignificance or inadequacy in their everyday lives and allows them a moment of video exposure," (Stark, p. 270). Of course, that was written before *American Idol* was born.

Even his critics had to admit, Barris established evidence that: 1) Americans would do almost anything to be on television; 2) once on TV, there was no limit to how much they would degrade themselves; 3) there was a large audience out there willing to watch them do it, (Stark, p. 122).

Barris also demonstrated that there was a steady audience for the perverse outrageousness and exhibitionism demonstrated on his shows. The proof was in the ratings and the fact that in 1976, Barris's production company had 27 half hour shows on at once in network television (www.tv.com). "They call me the father of reality television and I apologize for that because I don't think that's a great title," Barris was quoted as saying (www.tv.com).

The Game Show Network has found a successful way to expose a small window on America's cultural history by showing reruns of the 1970s game shows. *The Match Game* is the number one show on the Game Show Network and it's comprised of 30 year old reruns. It's still clever, after all these years. Any game show that lets the studio audience and the audience at home participate, is a timeless winner.

As cynical and sophisticated as we are today, the quiz show scandals of the 1950s would barely elicit a blip on our radar. Does anyone honestly believe that *Survivor* is real? Do we believe that these participants are forced to eat bugs to avoid starvation when they are being filmed by union crew members who have a catering truck parked nearby? Do we really believe that their lives are in danger, when the crew's union won't allow them to be exposed to danger? It's all a tale of greed. Game shows continue to be cheap productions with high returns and they will continue to be on the air as long as we are willing to watch. That is why every single game show on television today has roots in the 1950s and ultimately a connection to radio. Reality television is the sordid offspring of the marriage between soap operas and game shows. They will remain popular as long as people are voyeuristic and interested in that connection.

NEWS

We interrupt this broadcast...

"The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves."

-- Edward R. Murrow quoting William Shakespeare's
Julius Caesar on *See It Now*, March, 1954

"The goal of the traditional networks is to identify those segments of the audience considered most desirable by the advertising community and then to cater to them."

-- Ted Koppel (quoted in *The NY Times* on cnn.com)

It's very easy for Americans to forget that with freedom comes responsibility; responsibility to ourselves, our children and our neighbors. Part of the training in our American culture is a responsibility is to tell the truth. We have not known tyranny nor dictatorship in our land, because our forefathers wanted to avoid autocracy and specified a gatekeeper, someone who would always tell the truth. In theory, it would be someone to police the police.

The press, made up of journalists, was designated as the watchdog, the voice, the eyes and ears of America. Freedom of the press was granted to avoid control by one person or one entity. "Having a choice in channels decreases the chances that the media will become an instrument of propaganda. Competition spurs integrity," (Comstock, p. 107).

Integrity. The truth; the whole truth and nothing but the truth. We held our early newspapers to a high standard and demanded the truth

and immediate retraction if an error was made. Telling the truth and hearing the truth is as ingrained in the American character as our love for a good story. These worlds collide in modern television news programs.

How different is the news today than when compared to the early days? Did ratings matter as much to them in 1950, as they do today? Does the media still police the police? TV news in the twenty-first century is television at its best and its worst. The news can provide public service, education, lifesaving information, but unfortunately the line between news and entertainment gets blurred. Do ratings matter more today than veracity?

Five minute news programs were on the radio from the day the first signal was sent. Until 1938, no one had dominated the arena. Then emerged Edward R. Murrow, a college graduate newsman for CBS in Europe, who began broadcasting his eyewitness account of the bombings of London during World War II. Murrow was a very descriptive writer with a rich baritone voice that held the audience in suspense. He knew the beauty and the power of the spoken word and revered his responsibility as a journalist. Murrow set the standard for professionalism in journalism and took his role very seriously. He was America's eyes and ears throughout the early days of the war and to the bitter end as concentration camps were evacuated. He had the first regularly broadcast daily news program on the radio.

Once the war ended, Murrow and his crew returned to the United States and continued their radio work. Soon, the newfangled television system beckoned. Since he was already contracted with CBS, ruggedly handsome and charismatic, it was logical to place Murrow on television for the nightly news. He was a familiar voice, knew how to write and could certainly read his copy on the air. "We are impressed with the importance of this medium and we shall hope to use it and not to abuse it," Murrow said (*American Masters*).

Murrow did not abuse it. He took the nascent medium and began to form it in the image of radio. With a set that resembled a radio newsroom, Murrow appeared on camera and read his stories from sheets of paper that he held in his hand. In time, a teleprompter would be invented so that his eyes could look directly at the viewing audience while reading. Armed with a desk, a microphone, a globe, a map, a clock and an easel, Murrow relayed the news events from around the world. The occasional newsreel was also used for special effects.

Television is a visual medium and live broadcasting in the early days had its share of mistakes, mechanical malfunctions and lack of cooperation from the weather. Through it all, Murrow remained calm and told the story. On November 18, 1951, *See It Now* first aired and was a fresh concept called a magazine format and was broadcast coast-to-coast. Stories were covered on the road, filmed and brought back for this weekly news show. "We had this wonderful cast of

characters – the American people. They were so guileless about television,” (Murrow – *American Masters*). He even covered the soldiers in Korea during Christmas 1952, for *See It Now*. Murrow believed that the news team had a responsibility to educate and to open minds to what was happening in the world. “Television can take you places, even little places,” (Murrow – *American Masters*). Yet the news still revolved around words with very few visuals.

Newspapers and radio stations demanded the talents of journalists, those who could write as well as read the news to the audience. Reporters in the field were expected to write their scripts. Murrow had certainly set the standard and CBS News was by far, the best collection of journalists our nation had to offer. But television had different requirements. As a visual medium relegated to the living room of every home in America, the announcer also had to be friendly, non-threatening, informative and attention-getting in some way. Television had to compete with magazines, radio and newspapers that were already established. The advantage was that the anchor did not have to find the stories, write them and deliver them on air. He could sit in the comfort of the newsroom and wait for the field reporters to do the hard work. He just had to read and occasionally make eye contact.

Americans learned to live vicariously through the anchor. He told us what was happening in London, Paris, Moscow, Washington, New York and Los Angeles with an apparent first-hand knowledge. The viewing public had no idea what was involved in getting a story on the

air and frankly did not care. Truth, honesty and confidence in the press flowed from radio to television. Until 1952.

In January of 1952, Pat Weaver of NBC began the *Today* show as a weekday morning magazine. Thinking that waking Americans would love to know what happened overnight in their world, the show was launched with high expectations. Unfortunately, the ratings were dismal. One of the writers for the show happened to see a man with a chimp in the lobby of Rockefeller Center. Thinking the chimp would be a terrific gimmick, modern television news was born. Dave Garroway, host of the failing *Today* show suddenly had a sidekick, J. Fred Muggs. Muggs, the chimp, caught the attention of baby boomer children getting ready for school. A lesson was learned in American households that reverberated throughout the advertising industry: the children rule the tube. If they watched, their parents watched. If they wanted, their parents bought it. News was not just for adults any more. "Americans also may expect less or at least different things from television news than from print news," (Kottrock, p. 91).

To keep the little tykes happy and soften the impact of the serious subject, the *Today* show introduced women into the newsroom. Barbara Walters, Florence Henderson and other females graced the stage at Rockefeller Center and sent the ratings through the roof. Fashion, cooking, weather and light celebrity gossip became part of the line-up. "A central fact about television is that except for public broadcasting, which exists through charitable contributions, television

is a money-making business,” (quoting ABC news anchor Forrest Sawyer, Oskamp p. 30).

The success of the *Today* show in the morning hours gave NBC the courage to change the format of the evening news. In October of 1956, the *Huntley/Brinkley Report* aired on NBC. Breaking with the tradition of a single anchor, Huntley/Brinkley introduced Chet Huntley and David Brinkley with an innovative cut screen. Huntley was in New York and Brinkley was in Washington, D.C. The pace was faster, the stories shorter and the witty banter between the anchors made them appear to be more than “talking heads.” They were a huge success with 20 million Americans tuning in each weeknight. “In television journalism much more than in print journalism, the symbol of truth becomes the image of the journalist himself – the aggressive advocate willing to challenge authority – rather than the story or editorial self,” (Himmelstein, p. 203). Huntley and Brinkley introduced the electronic age with film footage and timing that allowed the visuals to tell the story. TV truly became a visual medium, (www.museum.tv).

In order to compete, CBS News allowed Murrow to create the “documentary” which combined news and entertainment; serious entertainment, but entertainment nonetheless. *Harvest of Shame* aired in 1960, and to this day can capture the hearts of those who watch. *Harvest of Shame* is an exposé of the poverty suffered by American farmers; farmers who could not afford to buy their own

children some milk each month. Again, Murrow's documentaries were on top in the ratings.

JFK was elected in November of 1960, and Murrow soon left CBS News to join Kennedy's communication circle in Washington. Murrow was replaced by a veteran radio journalist, Walter Cronkite. The CBS news expanded from 15 minutes to 30 minutes with Cronkite at the helm. JFK used the medium to communicate with the vast audience in this country. His live news conferences from the White House became the standard. Networks were only too happy to comply to the President's wishes for air time. After the quiz show scandals, networks were under pressure from the FCC to increase their public service broadcasting time and news footage fit the bill.

As November of 1963, rolled around, the assassination of JFK was reported immediately by Cronkite, live on the air. Television could go where viewers could not – and television sadly took us to the tragedy. This media event was unlike those of the past – the coronation of Elizabeth II or the Army-McCarthy hearings. This was happening now and involved a beloved president. He was not a remote celebrity, JFK was often seen on the television in our living rooms. “They are the moments that have come to define our lives,” (Garner, p. xiv). The sincerity of Cronkite coupled with the gravity of the headlines in the turbulent 1960s, made Cronkite the most trusted man in America. We turned to him for truth and honest reporting. The facts, just the facts. “By 1966, more Americans were getting their news from TV than any

other source,” (Stark, p. 126). From 1962 until 1982, Cronkite was the father figure to a nation that craved heroes and fathers.

Creating a local news department in the early days of television, gave evidence of community involvement and commitment. It was expensive to leave the newsroom, so newsreels were used and anchors were glorified readers.

Local news had begun during the 1950s, to fill time and space. The major networks produced their nightly news and sold it to the local stations for a fee and a cut of the advertising dollars. Fairly quickly, producers at the local level realized that if they created their own news shows, which were pretty inexpensive compared to other programming, they could keep all of the profit for themselves. Besides, it would fill time at a very low cost and keep the viewers informed. Newscasts began generating one third to half of the profits of the local stations. As a result, they expanded to an hour, then 90 minutes and then multiple times throughout the day.

National news grew from radio and brought with it the duty to deliver news responsibly. Anchors were experienced radio men. Local news started mainly because there was money to be made and hours to fill. These shows were often run by television people and not seasoned journalists, (Stark, p. 179). Their sense of responsibility was to the ratings and stockholders, not the viewers.

If you turn on a television in the morning, noon or 4, 5 or 6 p.m. or even 10 or 11 p.m., anywhere in the U.S., you will see the local

newscast and notice that it is the same formula across the land. From Bangor to San Diego the format is unchanging – just as it has been for the last 50-plus years: anchor(s) with headlines weather, traffic in the a.m., sports, health, lifestyle and a little levity at the end. Like McDonald's, they're all the same. Local news gives viewers what they want – not what they need. The local newscast replaced the network evening news and the newspaper alike as the average American's main source of news," (Stark, p. 177).

Until the late 1960s, local news was not as important as national news. An hour of network news and an hour of local news per day was enough in most major markets. The manner was quiet, the atmosphere was low key and mainly provided the regional news, weather and sports. In order to compete for their market share, media consultants convinced local news producers to become more friendly in delivering the news and a campaign to win viewers began that still exists today. Friendly, smiling, joking, talking heads replaced the newsmen of yesterday. It was not what the anchors had to say, but how nicely they said it that increased their ratings.

The news became highly limited in scope, with each newscast averaging about 16 items and with the majority of the news dealing with the United States and its activities. Each news item was approximately one minute and twenty seconds in length, (Comstock, p. 106). The total time allotted to the news became short, the items

brief, story selection and samples presented by personalities rather than journalists.

“The commitment to entertainment attracts a larger audience and leads to shallow reports,” (Comstock, p. 105). Consultants recommended that “action news” should have a high story count with striking visuals and exciting, upbeat music. They also recommended that local news should simplify and limit the treatment of complex news and eliminate upper class English (Stark, p. 179). This is abominable because the media remains the purveyors of our language, the very thing that separates us from the animals which is the ability to communicate verbally. The media which should hold the spoken word more sacred, simply crammed as many stories as possible into the time allowed in a dumbed down language for some supposed moronic viewer. Even with all of this effort, the average viewer could only recall 2.3 stories or 17% of what they heard immediately after a half hour news show. Print news remained superior in providing more recall for readers, (Comstock, p. 109).

A 1990 study published by the *Columbia Journalism Review* found that 18 of 32 stories analyzed on local news shows, were inaccurate or misleading and the station usually made no attempt to correct the mistakes. An informal 1993 survey by the *Washington Post* regarding local newscasts on stations in five big U.S. Cities, found that the stories involving crime, sex, disasters, accidents or public fears were running anywhere from 46 to 74 percent of the content, (Stark, p. 178).

Local stations had become windows on the world instead of their own main street. This unprofessional pattern still exists today.

Satellite news gathering erupted in the 1980s, giving local stations the national and international reach they needed via links. A small station could hook up to a satellite and buy national news in five minute increments. Using the same news satellite, local news vehicles could drive to the scene of an event and transmit from their van. Helicopters also became popular for aerial coverage of breaking news.

Market driven journalism claimed to connect with its viewers. CNN emerged in 1980, but no one was interested in 24-hour news programs. By the time of the Gulf War, everyone tuned in to CNN because they were first with coverage. Avoiding the down-home attitude of local news, yet not as formal as network news, CNN broke the mold and has remained on the air for 27 years without faltering. They give the viewers what they want with a great deal of commentary laced throughout. Because their media events look like news and acts like entertainment, CNN has remained a hit.

Advances in technology allowed reporters to go into the field more and more and reporting back to the newsrooms. This was efficient, cost-conscious and added to the appearance of action and thus, validity or veracity. Local news began to show dominance in the field and could dictate power because they had the audience to back it up. When Bill Clinton was running for president in 1992, he campaigned at

local stations because he knew they would ask easier questions, hit a higher audience and not emphasize his womanizing. This had a tremendous impact on national network news. Laziness and self promotion led to more entertainment stories from the networks because their ratings began to fall to the local competition. By 1995, the three major network broadcasts were airing 20 percent more stories about crime, which was roughly 400 percent more than the number they reported in 1991, (Stark, p. 181). It makes one wonder if the 1950s were really so innocent or was it just that they didn't have five to six hours of news on every single weekday and time to fill?

Weather reporting expanded with technology. As a highly visual technique, weather became more entertaining and somewhat educational and Americans became convinced that we needed all this detail about something we cannot even begin to control. Same with traffic reporting; is it really necessary to report on it every five to ten minutes, especially when there is nothing to report? According to Walter Cronkite:

The potential of journalism today is greater than it ever has been. Today, news people in general are far better educated than ever, many holding advanced degrees. With strong academic backgrounds, they have been far more aggressive in covering politics, business and the social movements of our time. At the same time, this potential is often nullified by the problems facing the journalistic profession, problems which impact the core of our democratic society. Today's journalists face continual pressures from

corporate ownerships and stockholders to dramatically increase profits, (Walter Cronkite, foreword, Garner, p. xi).

The level of credibility granted to print journalism and radio newscasts is far greater than that lent to television journalism and with good reason. Television is and always will be an advertising medium. It was honorable in its intentions and first efforts to report, but as soon as a chimpanzee began to participate in the reporting of the television news, it deteriorated into a form of entertainment. Although there have been grand moments in the coverage of special events, television news has never regained the respect it once held.

Children's Programming

Can You Say "Big Advertising Dollars?"

Young baby boomers adapted to television immediately upon its arrival and it was love at first sight. Believing that this was a gift just for our generation, we devoted countless hours to watching the tube and taught our children and their children to do the same. This intimacy with television is believed to heavily influence the way that children perceive and interpret the world in which they live. Ever since the television arrived in the home, there has been controversy and endless discussions about the proper use, exposure to children and educational content of children's programming. The federal government, school boards and the National Education Association, not to mention pediatricians, psychologists and, oh yes, advertisers and broadcasters who are represented in order to promote the next generation of consumers, all have an opinion.

Advertisers recognized fairly quickly that baby boomers would be "better educated, healthier, more affluent and certainly more sophisticated than any generation before us, especially if we bought the right products" (Douglas, p. 25). We truly believed that we were the chosen ones. "*Romper Room* was the world's largest kindergarten" from 1954-1994, (Lasswell, p. 61).

In 1950, children's programming was a selling point for television sets, blatantly promoting it as a family experience. Some of the earliest children's shows drew upon this and created lovable characters for children coupled

with quick wit and banter that was far more adult. Both age groups could indeed enjoy the same program at the same time.

Kukla, Fran & Ollie was one of the first of this genre. Equally popular with adults and kids, the humor derived from satire rather than slapstick. The format was simple, the wit was sharp, and improvised. An outline was prepared for the episode, but there wasn't a formal script. *Kukla, Fran & Ollie* aired from 4-5 p.m. Daily. By 1948, it was national and the growing interest from adults prompted NBC to air it at 7 p.m. Every evening. The show had six million viewers and remained on the air for 10 full years. In the summer of 1954, little known Detroit talent, Soupy Sales, became the summer replacement for *Kukla, Fran & Ollie*. He was such a hit, Soupy's show also became national the following year.

Howdy Doody was another phenomenon. On NBC from 1947-1960, *Howdy Doody* blatantly catered to the early baby boomers. According to Stark, "In 1948, Howdy received more write-in votes for president than did independent candidate Henry Wallace, by running on this platform: Two Christmases and one school day per year, more pictures in history books, double sodas for a dime and plenty of movies," (Stark, p. 14). It is believed that the seed of rebellion that would come to fruition in the 1960s, was planted at this time.

Howdy Doody was the first NBC show to hit 2,000 episodes. This show changed the way that kids were taught and sold to forever. Douglas noted, "By pitching so many things to us all the time that were only and specifically for us, the mass media insisted that we mattered. They told us that we were a

force to be reckoned with,” (Douglas, p. 27). By the time the show became a hit and moved the advertiser's products along rapidly, TV executives were going to find a way to disregard any moralizing about content or suitability, (Stark, p. 15).

The *Howdy Doody* show very much like the Milton Berle show in that it was loud, boisterous and seemed to be out of control. Again, with only one television in the house, many children's shows had adult humor because it was so likely an adult also had to watch. *Howdy Doody* had an assortment of supporting characters who kept it entertaining and on the air for a number of years. Each episode had a story line and there was an abundance of slapstick humor, (Stark, p. 16). The catchy theme song swept the nation and showed how important the music could be, (Stark, p. 17). It was becoming obvious that television had grown and its role as a babysitter was emerging, (Stark, p. 17). Critics often cited that the show was loud, confused and senseless, but it was big on advertising and found children to be a very powerful market. At this point, no one knew the future would be owned by a mouse.

In 1954, Walt Disney's studio was struggling and the studio head decided he needed to diversify. Given his library of feature length films, the first thing he tried was television. Making a deal with ABC that would give him the financial backing for his theme park, Disney agreed to produce and film one hour per week for the network. The network received a cut of the profits and all of the concessions at the theme park. *Disneyland*, a weekly series, debuted in October of that year and quickly became ABC's first top ten hit in

the ratings. In December of 1954, the first of three episodes focusing on Davy Crockett aired. The day after the telecast, Crockett-mania swept the country. "Coonskin caps may have been the first important clue. Their success proved that eight-year-olds had such economic clout that they could make the manufacturer of a rather ratty hunk of fur a millionaire – a lesson not lost on enterprising types," (Douglas, p. 24). As Pendergast noted, "Disney led the way with related merchandise with toys, clothing, records and eventually a hockey team," (Pendergast, p. 729).

The studio took the three episodes of Davey Crockett and edited them into a feature length film and released them nationally and internationally in the summer of 1955. The film's high attendance increased the visibility of the *Disneyland* television program and the increased the interest in the Disneyland theme park. When the park opened in July of 1955, ABC aired a live special about the tourist mecca. The first year, Walt Disney grossed \$10 million on the park (www.museum.tv/archives).

The premiere of the *Mickey Mouse Club* occurred the next year. The *Mickey Mouse Club* was a one-hour afternoon show aimed at the little boomers. It beat Howdy Doody so badly in the ratings, Howdy Doody was relegated to Saturday mornings. Howdy Doody was a live show that originated in New York, had adult performers and a live audience make up of kids. The *Mickey Mouse Club* was pure Hollywood, filmed, filled with child performers and no studio audience. One show had a puppet and the other had a cartoon character. The puppet never knew what hit him.

In 1961, Disney moved his show to NBC and aired it in color. It became known as *Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Color*. NBC's parent company, RCA, wanted to sell color television sets and hoped that Disney in color would sell the sets. ABC and CBS did not have a connection to any television manufacturers and dragged their feet into the world of color. The sale of color television sets did not exceed those of black and white until 1972, when more than 50 percent of television programming was in color. (U.S. Census Bureau)

During the 1960s, animation became more popular, because of color and low production costs. There were advantages to children's programming that didn't exist in the adult world. Children never complained about reruns which helped to decrease production costs and increase profits. Shows like *The Flintstones*, *The Jetsons*, *Rocky & Bullwinkle* and *Beanie and Cecil* were popular children's shows with berths in the prime-time line-up. All entertained the kiddies with the subtle adult twist, enough to hold their own in the evening hours.

As more and more children stayed glued to the tube, more and more criticism began to emerge. There was a distinct pattern of watching displayed by this little audience. Girls would watch boys' shows, but boys would not watch girls' shows. Young children would watch "up" (in age appeal) because older siblings controlled the set. Yet, older siblings would not watch "down." By the age of 8, viewing patterns resemble those of adults (www.museum.tv/archives).

Television was such a constant in the home during the 1950s and 1960s, most of the post World War II generation used television as background noise, and now, as adults, still often read, eat, do chores, and talk while “watching” television.

The Children's Television Network was formed in 1967 by Joan Ganz Cooney, to obtain funding for educational programming to help inner city kids do better in school. Cooney soon discovered that children have a short attention span, and repetition was found to be a key component to education and entertainment. Her creation became *Sesame Street*. With original songs, rapid cuts, few adults and lovable Muppets, the show has been a smash for almost 40 years. According to Lasswell, “It is imaginative, educational and amusing. The best of television,” (Lasswell, p. 60).

It went on the air with very specific attention-holding tactics such as fast movement, humor, slapstick and animation. It was packaged in a magazine format and presented as a carefully prepared lesson plan that focused on teaching letters and numbers.

Sesame Street was revolutionary in 1969. Research has proven that children learn skills from this show and these skills contribute to early educational success (www.museum.tv/archives). Socialization, especially sex role socialization, has been of continuing concern because television frequently presents basic images of gender. In prime time, men outnumber women 2:1 and the very same is true with children's programming.

Kids also learn from advertising and PBS has been airing *Sesame Street* since 1969, without commercials. That doesn't mean that *Sesame Street*

producers haven't made tens of millions with their own product endorsements, but it does mean that they don't sell shampoo, cereal or Mattel toys to the little kids who are watching.

For years, novels, movies, music, radio and comic books came under fire for their potential negative consequences on the attitudes and behaviors of the young. Since 1950, the spotlight has been on television and although it shares the limelight on occasion with music, the scrutiny remains on TV first and foremost. Congress, educational advocacy groups and broadcasters have debated the issues for almost 60 years. The only legislation that was proactive was the inclusion of a monitoring "V-chip" in 1996, allowing families to block certain programs. PBS published a guideline to help parents monitor the television-watching of their small children. They claim that TV is good when:

- it encourages creativity and critical thinking
- it introduces your children to skills and ideas they need to learn
- it models ways to solve problems and get along
- it entertains and teaches
- it reinforces values that are important to you
- helps children appreciate diversity
- inspires children to want to learn more or read

TV is not good when:

- it occupies too much time
- doesn't teach values that are important to you

- it teaches ideas words or behaviors that you can't unteach
- it is too adult
- shows violence as a means to problem-solve
- reinforces stereotypes
- encourages children to think that they need to buy products

(www.pbs.org/readytolearn/resources/guidelines.html)

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, the average child sees more than 20,000 commercials each year. If your child watches 3-4 hours of noneducational TV per day, he will have seen 8,000 murders on TV by the time he finishes high school (www.aap.org/family/tv1.htm).

Children's programming has not changed at all since 1950, but what has changed is the attitude toward television. Through the years, it has become a teacher, babysitter, parent and judge and that was never the intention. It is the best of television and the worst of television. Commercial television is just that – filled to the brim with advertisements to sell products whether the audience is 5 or 50. Public broadcasting is only slightly better because while supporting an honorable, academic approach, they are still selling a product and those “Tickle Me Elmo” dolls don't fly off the shelves without help. It's a fine line between blatant, crass commercialism and “supporting” PBS.

The Melodrama

Go Western, Young Man

The word "*melodrama*" comes from the Greek word for song and is combined with "*drama*" which means action. Music is often used to manipulative an emotional response in a melodrama. There is also a distinct format for melodrama that includes a villain who poses a threat; the hero who escapes the threat (or rescues the heroine); and a happy ending or at least all of the questions are answered and the bad guys are locked up or punished. In melodrama there is always a heightened battle between good and evil. It's different than tragedy because melodrama provides a happy ending. They ride off into the sunset or down the road or over the hill, but together or at least content for the moment.

The first major American motion picture was *The Great Train Robbery* released in 1903. The nation was thrilled and the love affair with the American western began. The stories of cowboys and Indians continued to be popular at the movies and by the 1940s and 1950s, these melodramatic stories were serialized and shown in local theaters as part of the Saturday matinee lineup. These same cowboy heroes often had radio shows to reinforce their presence with the audience.

As television gained momentum and attention, the transition of westerns to the TV was a natural. This was a genre that the audience was familiar with and the production costs were fairly low which made them terrific

programming selections for the producers. Many B-western movies from Hollywood were edited and easily used as fillers for empty air times at a very moderate fee.

Westerns provide viewers with the opportunity to look back at what our American history was or should have been. In the post World War II years and at the beginning of television, the American cowboy hero was an icon who represented a masculine ideal and moral compass to a nation that was confused and bruised by world war, crime and the constant threat of communism.

In 1949, Hopalong Cassidy's weekly half hour show on NBC hit #7 in the ratings. Cassidy cashed in with product endorsements that included roller skates, soap, watches and jack knives selling \$1 million worth of merchandise in 10 days (www.tvarchives.com). The success of *Hopalong Cassidy* encouraged producers to create more westerns aimed at baby boomers. Strong heroes were positive role models for the young viewers. Another famous cowboy, Gene Autrey, developed the *Cowboy Code*:

- A cowboy never takes unfair advantage, even of an enemy
- A cowboy never betrays a trust
- A cowboy always tells the truth
- A cowboy is kind to small children, to old folks and to animals
- A cowboy is free from racial and religious prejudice
- A cowboy is always helpful and when anyone is in trouble, he lends a hand
- A cowboy is a good worker

- A cowboy is clean about his person and in thoughts, words and deed
- A cowboy respects womanhood, his parents and the laws of his country
- A cowboy is a patriot (www.museum.tv/archives)

With an emphasis on work ethics and patriotism, the *Cowboy Code* seemed to be referring to the post war insecurities of the 1940s and early 1950s. This code reflects on important elements of the American character. The cowboy personified what we believed to be true Americans. They were the original American idol. The cowboys embodied our history, our pioneering efforts, courage and fortitude that it required to civilize our nation. To a country trying desperately to heal deep injuries from a world war, being able to easily identify and support the good guys was a blessing. The heroes were handsome and strong, honest and generally wore white hats. According to Himmelstein, "Heroes are ultimately social types. Social types are drawn from a cultural stock of images and symbols. They provide models that people try to approximate and perhaps more importantly, they act as a kind of photograph of society's activities," (Himmelstein, p. 158).

The tenets of the *Cowboy Code* also reflected a decidedly masculine and sexist view layered with righteous morality that was a sense of right and wrong without shades of gray. Since the roots of American society are based in religion and religion is patriarchal, this thinking was ingrained in our culture many years before television was an influence, but television was a tool to reinforce the concept. For example, *Rin-Tin-Tin* was about a young boy growing up in Fort Apache, AZ with his brilliant dog by his side. *Fury* was

about a young boy and his talented horse. *Roy Rogers*, *Wild Bill Hickok*, *Wyatt Earp* were male-dominated shows with achingly handsome leading men in order to attract the ladies and it did work. Nonetheless, television quickly became a male dominated medium and the melodrama was no exception. To forgive its similarity to soap operas, the melodramas aired in the evening hours and had the nearly all-male cast that oozed testosterone. Examination of the hero reveals much about our culture. With four 12-minute acts and a crescendo in the story line before the finale, melodramas on TV were fairly predictable. Post World War II, we loved predictability. The Eisenhower years were predicated on predictability, comfort and homogeneity.

As Douglas observed, "Of the top 25 prime-time shows in the 1959-60 season, 11 were about cowboys with shiny metal oblongs of various sizes strapped to their thighs and their oblongs were bigger and faster than anyone else's," (Douglas, p. 43). Where were the women and girls?

Maverick debuted in 1957, with the handsome James Garner. Bret Maverick was different than the other cowboys – he had a sense of humor and a sense of the ridiculous. *Have Gun Will Travel* first aired in 1958, and also brought a new type of antihero to the forefront. Paladin was a hired gun with a college education. He had a strong code of honor and always dressed in black, when he was on the job (Lasswell, p. 48). *Gunsmoke* began in 1955, and stayed on the air until 1975, setting the record for the longest running prime-time series with continuing characters. *Wagon Train* featured Major Seth Adams moving settlers to the west coast as they braved the

Indians, the terrain, the bad weather and bad guys. Women had supporting roles, but the men had the guns and good lines. "If Shakespeare were alive today, he'd be writing westerns," actor Barry Sullivan was quoted as saying in 1961," (Stark, p. 63).

With the high body count on westerns, viewers and regulators became concerned about the violent image we were projecting to the rest of the world. "Because females didn't have these cylindrical accessories, they had to stay home and take care of the youngins, bake corn bread and darn the cowboys' smelly socks," (Douglas, p. 43) As a result, slowly, the westerns began to include more women. *The Big Valley* and *High Chaparral* had leading women in the cast. Families appeared and the stories became more concentrated on characters and issues rather than the number of gunshots or arrows that could be dispensed in 60 minutes.

According to Stark, "Shows became a weekly morality play, "(Stark, p. 64). Marshal Dillon opened his show each week in an opening face-off with a bad guy, not unlike the relationship between JFK and Khrushchev during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. "*Gunsmoke* pitted the good people of Dodge City against the ugly forces of lawlessness," (Pendergast, Vol. 2, p. 327), which sounds very much like the confrontation between democracy and communism. The "us versus them mentality" reinforced the paranoia of the post World War II period, (Stark, p. 65). As Senator Joseph McCarthy ranted on the air about communists being everywhere including the grocery store, Americans had no choice but watch behind their backs. Seeing a good guy

on television win and the bad guy lose, had to provide some comfort that the world was a rational place.

Westerns embodied the conservative values our nation had adopted after the war. The emphasis was on traditional values of home and heart. The message was clear, "It's not the law or big government which can make America a great place to live in, but the basic decency of a governed man," (Stark, p. 65).

Bonanza was a huge hit for various reasons. JFK was in the White House and we applauded courage, humor, wit and handsome faces. *Bonanza* had all of these elements. As part of the surge to include families in the western, the Cartwrights were a family. An entirely male family, but nonetheless a family. The sons on the show: Adam, Hoss and Little Joe, reflected the viewers. Serious Adam, slow but sweet Hoss and fun loving Joe could be identified in just about every household (Pendergast, Volume 2, p. 316). *Bonanza* was also the first western to be shown in magnificent color and that alone brought viewers to the set. The black and white world was on its way out. Color brought life and reality to the shows.

As the 1960s progressed, there was an enormous cultural upheaval as the baby boomers reached the teen years. No longer willing to accept rules and responsibilities that didn't necessarily make sense, the revolt by the under-30 audience began. Television shows changed and shifted their violence to more dramatic situations that were character driven (Pendergast, Vol. 2, p. 327) rather than six-shooter. Space shows also emerged because JFK

defined the space program as part of the New Frontier. Westerns were part of the past. Outer Space was the future.

The cold war continued to leave our nation frigid. Spy shows appeared on the line-up. *Man from U.N.C.L.E.* and *I Spy*, as well as *The Prisoner*, *The Avengers* were huge hits. Because Americans love a sense of humor, *Get Smart* debuted in the 1960s as well to spoof the seriousness of the spy series.

America in the 1950s was corporate and generic. Immigrants with ties to the old country were cut and interest in being American became paramount. Blacklisting of communists was rampant. The cold war with Russia was in full swing and atomic threats could be real with one phone call. Melodramas offered a problem and a solution in one hour. Good wins, evil loses every time. "As the Russian threats escalated with Sputnik launching in 1957, Americans needed a sense of control and a sense of order," (Himmelstein, p. 169). *Dragnet*, and *The Untouchables* broke through the western genre and became popular. They were still men fighting crime and winning as the cowboys fought Indians and bad guys and won.

If you exchange the shiny gun for a law degree or medical degree, you will have the modern version of the cowboy. Whether it's *Law & Order* or *ER* or *House*, it is still a battle of good versus evil – which in some cases is a life-threatening disease – with a father-figure in charge. The cowboy can call himself Matt Dillon or Jack McCoy, it's the same character. The maintenance of peace and harmony is still the most important element. The show doesn't end until everything is back in place. The good guy has won and destroyed

the flesh-eating bacteria or destroyed the drug ring that was running amuck in Manhattan or identified the terrorists and placed them behind bars. It's still the same story with heroes, fewer guns, not many horses, and bad guys just waiting for their chance to break the law.

The Situation Comedy

George: "Gracie, what do you think of TV?"

*Gracie: "I think it's wonderful. I hardly ever
watch radio any more."*

We've established that television was a family medium immediately because there was generally only one television in the household in the 1950s, and it had to be shared. Television also reflected our society and specific interests of the viewing audience, for example, boxing, baseball or cooking shows. Early television showed life in the emerging suburbs as well as life in the cities. The family was the center of our culture and the reason we fought for freedom and democracy in World War II and why we were fighting a cold war with Russia. Family values are at the core of the American culture. Sitcoms make people feel good and feel comfortable and the characters become like family. With the trend today to broken homes and cocooning, we crave that human connection. Himmelstein observed, "The suburb was the mythical space between the untamed rugged frontier—the wilderness—and the chaotic dangerous inner city," (Himmelstein, p. 87).

Something else at the core of the American culture is a sense of humor. We love a good story, but especially if it makes us laugh. According to Comager, "Imagination and enthusiasm characterized the American's humor as well as his sentiment. Humor was not only a positive but a notorious national trait; as pervasive as optimism and carelessness—and closely allied

with both—it cropped up in the most unexpected places and left few things untouched,” (Comager, p. 24).

The situation comedy was developed as a truly American art form in radio around 1928 with *Amos 'n Andy*. Later it was found to be perfectly suited to television and *Amos 'n Andy* was one of the first sitcoms to air. In less than 30 minutes it's “a small hunk of life exaggerated for comic purposes,” (Mitz, p. 3) and appears on the screen with a synthetic laugh track. We watched mesmerized. The sitcom embodies all that we love: “From Franklin to Mark Twain, American humor tended to exaggeration and extravagance; not until the next century was it to sour into sophistication and wit. It was fundamentally outrageous and in this reflected the attitude toward authority and precedent,” (Comager, p. 25). No other genre on television reflects the American habits, characteristics and idiosyncrasies like the situation comedy. “It was democratic and leveling, took the side of the underdog and ridiculed the great and the proud,” (Comager, p. 25).

The situation comedy is different from sketch comedy or monologues which were without characters other than a narrator. In the sitcom, the humor is character-driven and the characters are in similar situations from week to week.

A sitcom is generally a 23-minute, two-act playlet with an epilogue. “Episodes are generally self-contained,” (Himmelstein, p. 77). Above all else, the sitcom is a surrogate community on television,” (Spigel, p. 129).

There are five types of situation comedies (www.wsu.edu). The artcom is filled with an action and reaction of some sort. It's based on a variety of

themes—*I Love Lucy* is based on Lucy's attempt to break into show business; a gimmick as in *Bewitched*, *I Dream of Jeannie*; a place like *Gilligan's Island*, *Hogan's Heroes* or *Cheers*; or it revolved around occupations as in *Night Court* or *Barney Miller*. The emphasis is always on action, snappy dialogue and physical comedy.

Next is the domcom or domestic comedy which is centered around the family. The domcom has a slower pace and focuses on the growth and development of the characters. The domcom is more mental and emotional. *December Bride*, *My Three Sons*, *Donna Reed*, *Everybody Loves Raymond* and *Leave It To Beaver* are examples. There was also a conformity to community pressure in suburbia reflected in the identical homes, yards, cars and ideals. This desire for “sameness” came from the post war backlash against non-American influences.

The dramedy is not entirely devoted to laughter. They are thought provoking, sincere and generally introduce some form of conflict in each episode. For example, *All in the Family* and *M.A.S.H.* are classic dramedies.

Careercom focuses on the job and ensemble cast. This was perfected by *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and *Dick Van Dyke* and evolved into *The Office*. Most of the action occurs at the of work place and the humor stems from the day to day foibles and peculiarities of co-workers and bosses.

The last is the ethnicom which is entirely made up of minorities with the focus on being latino or African-American. *Amos 'n Andy* was the very first, but *Sanford & Son* broke into the top 10 ratings in the 1970s and *George*

Lopez and *Bernie Mac* enjoy popularity today. Mitz observed, "People want a mirror held up to life, but at an angle so that it's humorous," (Mitz, p. 3).

Television comedy in the 1950s was about reassurance and safety with the promise of a future. Mediocrity was a goal not a failure. Waging peace and happiness meant being like everybody else because even Levittown had rules. Deeds to Levitt houses specified that no fences were to be built and lawns were to be mowed at least once a week in season and laundry could be hung only on rotary racks, not on clotheslines and never on weekends, (Miller and Nowak, p. 133). After World War II, we desired to present a united front to the Japanese, Germans, Russians, and ourselves and we did so by becoming homogeneous and ignoring ethnic roots. "The puritan ethic dominated the mental landscape of the suburban dweller," (Himmelstein, p. 88).

Since traditional neighborhood bonding stopped and we no longer talked to the folks next door over the fence or went downtown on Saturday night to commune with neighbors and friends, Americans have expected the television shows to substitute for that human connection. We like the reliability and predictability that it brings to our lives. It's an exercise of our socialization skills without dealing with real-life humans and their quirks. Comedies replaced leisure time outside the home and we discovered that we could get our laughs indoors. It was like that from the beginning, when we immediately fell in love with TV and stayed home to be entertained. "Although the home magazines idealized large picture windows and sliding

glass doors for the view of the outside world they provided, they also warned that windows had to be carefully covered with curtains, venetian blinds, or outdoor shrubbery in order to avoid the 'fish bowl' effect. Television would seem to hold an ideal place here because it was a 'window on the world' that could never look back," (Spigel, p, 117). There were pretend social events and pretends friends who couldn't criticize or disappoint. There were no conflicts—if you disagreed, you held the power to turn the television off or change the channel. The ultimate master and slave concept, but interestingly, the slave became the master through the years. "Television also allowed people to enter into an imaginary social life, one that was not shared in the neighborhood networks of bridge clubs and mahjong gatherings, but on the national networks of CBS, NBC and ABC," (Spiegel, p. 132).

The segregated comedies of the 50s, mirrored the segregated communities and schools in America. *Donna Reed*, *Leave It To Beaver*, *Father Knows Best* were all white, middle class families in the suburbs confined to racial exclusion. "Ralph is still driving a bus. Lucy is still chasing the stars. Ann Marie still can't find an acting job. It's that predictability that's the basis of the humor. People don't change, the shows seem to be telling us," (Mitz, p. 3). Interestingly, the opening credits of these shows showed the house which could be perceived as an invitation to come in. "In 1952, Motorola promised that its 'new dimensions of realism' would bring action right into the living room," (Spigel, p. 133).

As the divorce rates in the 1960s soared, situation comedies slowly introduced single parents as in *My Three Sons*, *Family Affair*, *Here's Lucy*,

The Big Valley, and *Julia*. None of these parents were divorced mainly because the censorship codes demanded that they be widowed. Divorce was still taboo and widowhood was acceptable since the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963. Since the First Family had been destroyed and Jackie had to raise her children alone, widowhood had never been so chic.

Animated sitcoms began in the late 1960s with *The Flintstones* and *The Jetsons*. The genre is alive and well today with *The Simpsons* holding the record for longest running prime-time network cartoon in American television. *The Simpsons* have been on television since 1989. Edgy, cynical and controversial, *The Simpsons* is an animated sitcom filled with contradictions. President George Bush publicly criticized the show for its "subversive and anti-authority nature," (www.museum.tv).

Silly sitcoms during the 1960s like *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *Green Acres*, and *Petticoat Junction* were popular because they revered traditional values and did everything without violence (Stark, p. 109). They were the perfect antidote after the network evening news highlighting the escalation of the war in Vietnam, draft card burnings and riots in major cities. These shows were pure fun and escapism centered on the clash between urban and rural outlooks, temperaments and behaviors much like the clash between democracy and communism or the Southeast Asian culture versus western ideology. This "fish out of water" attitude made *The Real McCoys*, *The Andy Griffith Show* and *Gomer Pyle* huge hits for years.

In the 1970s, *Maude* introduced divorce and abortion to the sitcom. A few years later *One Day At A Time* premiered. *One Day At A Time* was not the

first sitcom to introduce a divorced mother, but it was the most realistic. The main character, Ann Romano, struggled for every penny she had and often had to battle with her ex-husband for child support. She struggled with finding and keeping a job as she raised her two teen daughters alone—a situation that was occurring in many households across the country. Ann Romano met her challenge with a sense of humor and common sense which made a divorced woman with children more comfortable to us in our own living rooms. Slowly, using television as a social mediator, society accepted the single mothers and stopped ostracizing them as had been the previous practice. Himmelstein stated, “Comedy... is grounded in both time and place—it addresses the immediate life conditions of the society in which it is produced,” (Himmelstein, p. 75).

From the 1978-1979 season, every show in the top 10 Nielsen rating was a sitcom (Winzenburg, p. 10). Immersed in double digit inflation, hostages in Iran, high gasoline prices and a poor job market, Americans needed to laugh at something. Stark observed, “In this country, everyone wants to be wealthy and, times of economic crisis excepted, there is usually little resentment of those who want more,” (Stark, p. 101).

The 1980s brought shows that highlighted the blending of traditional male and female roles as well as breaking the age ceiling. *Bosom Buddies* had males dressing as females without a hint of homosexuality or transvestitism in order to save money and have a nice apartment in Manhattan. *Growing Pains* had a work-at-home father while *Hail to the Chief* was about a female president. The economy forced a two-income household and traditional

chores were divided to keep the homefront running smoothly. These shows reflected the changes that were occurring to both genders.

By 1990, the economy was booming and we were centered on ourselves. The goal was success and excess. The viewing audience had become quite sophisticated by this time and *Seinfeld* captures the vacuous 1990s perfectly. Ushering in the new decade, Jerry Seinfeld was a comedy about nothing. Breaking all of the sitcom rules for predictability, *Seinfeld* was about nothing. The ensemble cast could not even be called friends, because they did nothing that was not self-serving. As an antidote, *Friends* was on just before *Seinfeld* and it was all about friendship and loyalty. These two comedies showed the dichotomy of the times. We were torn between being homebodies and working. We were torn between riches and a warm hearth. Family values began to fade. *Murphy Brown* openly had a child out of wedlock which outraged the real Vice President of the United States, who apparently had a problem with reality versus make-believe. *Grace Under Fire* dealt with domestic abuse and alcoholism.

According to Winzenburg, "Broadcast television is about to hit a milestone that it may not want to celebrate. For the first time in the 55 year history of network TV ratings, it appears there will not be one situation comedy on the Nielsen top 10 list at the end of the season," (Winzenburg, p. 10). Sitcoms have been in decline since the end of *Seinfeld* in May of 1998, roughly around the time the economy crashed. Slowly, situation comedies are returning. *Scrubs*, *Two And A Half Men*, *My Name is Earl* are holding on to their ratings. There is hope and faith that the sitcom will return in full force for its escapism

and fun, but even history repeats and the sitcom mirrors our society, they won't be back until the war in Iraq is over, the economy is booming again and the fear of terrorism subsides. For now, we may have lost our collective sense of humor.

According to *Barney Miller's* Detective Dietrich: "We manage to have a laugh or two at Humanity's expense."

CONCLUSION

The more things change...

What does nostalgia really mean? "Periods of intense longing for an earlier era indicate that people are discontented with the present," (Miller and Nowak, p. 4). Television was born at a time that wasn't so sweet and innocent regardless of what they said on *Happy Days*.

President Truman had signed the executive orders that triggered the cold war and anti-communism. Our culture was looking for someone to make us feel safe again. Someone who would fight off any threat to our nation and way of life. We wanted desperately to heal from the wounds of war and stop the fighting.

Dwight D. Eisenhower, war hero with common-man appeal seemed to be the answer. He could guide the country in the post war years and keep us safe. He was a five-star general in World War II. We were in safe hands. Something went terribly wrong.

Eisenhower emphasized conformity. Religious interest hit an all-time high in the 1950s and evangelists were hugely popular. Billy Graham, Norman Vincent Peale and Bishop Fulton J. Sheen were seen regularly on television. They knew how to use the newfangled medium to spread the word of God to shut-ins as well as the devoted throngs.

Cars were huge and tank-like for safety. By 1952, almost one-third of the large U.S. Corporations were using personality test to assure that they hired

“yes men,” (Miller and Nowak, p. 129). Women had marriage and babies to look forward to as a measure of success. There were clear sexual roles, bomb shelters, conservative politicians, complaints about poor education and why Johnny can't read and repressed sexual lyrics in rock and roll that we listened to on the way to watch a rebel movie. President Eisenhower's most trusted advisor, Sherman Adams, was fired for taking bribes. “Much of the national debate focused on dissatisfaction with the quality of American life. Conformity and materialism, critics argued, had dulled Americans into a complacent averageness,” (Miller and Nowak, p. 19). The Eisenhower years stressed “sameness” with emphasis on WASP, male, black suit, black tie, white shirt, two kids, house in the suburbs, station wagon and a dog. You did not dare to be different. “There was security through compliance with the system,” (Miller and Nowak, p. 7).

Senator Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities committee dominated the news, the advertisers and ultimately the medium. Never before in the history of our country was the freedom of speech so threatened. It was an era of fear: there was fear of communism, atomic annihilation, spies and cold wars, much like today although we're more concerned about terrorism than communism, but we carefully keep a jaundiced eye on Russia.

This was also a time of age, sex and racial discrimination. Civil rights were far from equal. In 1950, there was the conviction of Alger Hiss, the trial and execution of the Rosenbergs, the Korean War, criminal investigations into organized crime, rampant poverty and militarism. “These people [American

middle class of 1950s] were not self-made men who remembered their struggles against hardship but, rather a society-made generation who could not believe society would let them down. They were confident, suburbanized, safe and born here in America,” (Miller and Nowak, p. 17). From a 1950s housewife, “It keeps us happier. My husband and I get along a lot better. We don't argue so much. It's wonderful for couples who have been married 10 years or more. Before television, my husband would come in and got to bed. Now we spend time together,” (Bogart, p. 93).

By the end of the fifties, everyone was looking for a rebirth and John F. Kennedy seemed to be the promise of an exciting future. But something went terribly wrong again. Any baby boomer can tell you where he/she was at the time he/she heard about the assassination of JFK. We watched his murderer get murdered on a sunny Sunday afternoon. We watched his brother and other leaders gunned down during the next five years. We watched boys come home from Vietnam in body bags. We had become desensitized to the violence. “Inertia, not standards dictated viewing,” (Fowles, p. 17). Nonetheless, we get a lot out of television viewing.

- It's a private experience even when others are in the room
- It's pleasant and casual – you can come and go as you please
- It's an evening activity and passes the time
- It replaces socializing
- It provides a fantasy diversion and dream world
- It doesn't judge you, unless you discuss your tastes with your friends and that's entirely elective

“A series of scientific studies has documented that for people who are functioning in the real world, but are distressed, television helps bring peace of mind,” (Fowles, p. 55).

Television is still the major form of entertainment today, nearly 60 years later. It is in your living room, family room, bedrooms, kitchen and phone. With all of the abuse that television has suffered, it's still here. It's recession-proof, politically bipartisan and commercial. Yes, commercial. Television was never an extension of the educational system. It wasn't brought to us by the wonderful people at the National Education Association. It was brought to us by the wonderful people at NBC. Those with loftier ideals and goals were doomed to disappointment.

Television did become a substitute for real families—for the absent father with a thick accent or one who worked in a foundry and didn't understand or recognize popular culture or the value of a daughter; for the woman who yearned to be married, but never met the right guy or at least one she could settle for. Television offered families that didn't hide alcoholics or molesters and offered a safe place to go every week or every day after school. It also offered a family who could teach right from wrong and knew what was best for you.

People spend roughly 33 percent of their lives at work, 40 percent in maintenance activities such as eating, cooking, shopping, cleaning, personal care; and the remaining 27 percent devoted to leisure activities. Of this third, the “single activity that clearly absorbs the most time in modern societies is watching television,” (Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi, p. 12). In 1990, people

worldwide made up 3.5 billion viewing hours per day. "At a macrosocial level, some scholars argue that leisure and television serve to perpetuate the basic patterns of industrial life by providing escape from the monotony of work without making the return to work too unbearable," (Howe, p. 33).

Still, it is an advertising medium. The purpose is to sell time in order to sell product. "What is true is that television commercials create demand that did not exist before," (Mankiewicz, p. 238). Programming is established by advertisers and advertisers are established by their ability to sell. Television is a very powerful vehicle for moving product.

Are we manipulated by television? Certainly if we believe every word. Television is not held to the same standards as print. There is no obligation for exact truth over the airwaves. Once it has aired, it can be forgotten. Once it's in print, it's permanent.

For those of us who grew up watching TV and learned to read the rolling credits at the speed of light, we know that television essentially has not changed in almost 60 years. As a medium that is used to entertain, occasionally inform, provides relaxation, we also know that television content will go unchanged until another medium comes along to provide such experiences. According to Matthew Weiner, creator of *Mad Men*, an unsentimental look at advertising in the 1960s, as quoted in the *Detroit Free Press*, "My approach to the past is that human experience doesn't change. The rules change, the behavior changes, but what we like and what we don't like, what we fear...all of our feelings are the same."

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